

activity shamed the youngest amongst us. His great pleasure was to gallop on his favorite horse, Richelieu, leaving half his staff behind him. When the day's work was over, he insisted on the officers occupying themselves immediately in tenting their men, so as to save them from the fatigue of waiting; and he went round himself to see that these orders were obeyed, and never dismounted till he had seen the last man properly at rest.

"His activity was only equalled by his temperance. 'A potato is quite enough for me,' he would say; 'I have the stomach of an ostrich.' At five o'clock he takes a cup of coffee and a bit of bread: after which he very often eats nothing till seven o'clock in the evening, when his dinner takes about five minutes, while we spend two hours over ours! On the 23rd of September, having started early to see how the regiments were marching, he perceived that the carts of supplies with the sutlers were going before the column, in spite of his formal orders that they should go behind. Very much displeased, he turned to us, and said: 'It seems that the French army has become the army of the belly. To the rear!'"

One of his rules was to give the most precise orders to all his subordinates, of which orders he took the sole responsibility. He richly deserved the praise of General de Gallifet, who said of him: "No one knows as well as he does how perfectly to command and perfectly to obey."

CHAPTER XVI.

General De Sonis left Limoges on the 1st of February 1883. He went to Paris to prepare to die. It was the consummation of his existence in suffering, and in the hope of Heaven, but also in sanctity and the love of God. He took up his residence at Passy, near the Bois du Boulogne, in a quiet quarter of the town and close to a private chapel, which was always open to him. He also attached great importance to being near the Carmelite Fathers, with whom his belonging to the Third Order had united him by the closest ties.

In the middle of March, however, he was taken with such violent nephritic pains that every one thought he would have died. "The adorable Hand of God," he wrote to Dom Sarlat, "has nailed me for six weeks on the Cross. It began the evening of Palm Sunday, and I had four doctors that night. I thought my death was at hand, and took leave of my family."

During that terrible night, he called Madame De Sonis to his bed-side to give her his last directions, confiding her to God, and thanking her in the warmest way for the many years of happiness she had given him. After that, he asked for the last Sacraments, which the doctors, however, thought must be delayed a little. "At last," he wrote, "they brought me Our Lord, who has deigned to preserve my life a little longer for the sake of my dear family. I have ever since had the great grace of receiving the Divine Consoler every Sunday. The expelled Carmelite Fathers, who are near here, come to me constantly, and do me great good." De Sonis saw in this dangerous crisis a new warning to prepare himself for eternity. When his children spoke of this or that journey, he would reply that "he had only one more to make, and that was the great one to Heaven, which cannot be missed." In the same way, when Dom Sarlat begged him to come to his First Mass, he answered: "I am united to you in Holy Communion, and now that you have received the fullest of God's gifts, you can walk with a firm step towards a blessed eternity."

He tried to accustom himself to separation from those he loved, in view of the final separation which he felt was imminent. To his daughter, who had been sent for her health to the Sacred Heart Convent at Kientzheim, in Alsace, he wrote: "Our Lord willed that my illness should prevent my seeing you for some time; and now that I am beginning to get better, He has separated you from us. Let us adore His holy will, and say together, Fiat!"

General de Sonis had the joy of seeing Madame De Sonis enrolled also as a