



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XX.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, MAY 6, 1870.

No. 38.

THE DOUBLE SACRIFICE OR THE PONTIFICAL ZOUAVES.

A TALE OF CASTELFIDARDO.

Translated from the Flemish of the Rev. S. Dasmis Canon Regular of the Order of Premonstratensians. (Abbey of Tongerlo, Belgium.)

CHAPTER XV.—CONTINUED.

Far from it," answered Lorenzo, "and my blood boils in my veins when I think of it. Did not General Cialdini boast after the battle that he had a considerable number of dead on his hands? The cruel monster! he refused the Pontificals the mournful privilege of burying their dead comrades. He cast the bodies into a common hole, and thus refused the fathers and mothers, who soon hastened from every side of the hill, the consolation of weeping over their children's graves. Ah! he may boast of it, but let his day once come, and his punishment will be fearful. The Chaplains of the Pontifical army were forbidden to exercise their sacred ministry beside the dying. 'Let them die, the *canaille*,' said he roughly; 'if they want priests let them have our chaplains.' But, general, the French, the Belgians, the Irish, the Germans, understand no Italian, they want Priests of their own country." "Come, come," growled the commander, in answer; "that scum which fights for the Priests is not worth so much trouble. They are prisoners of war. Soldiers, watch them well."

"Good heavens, what cruelty!" said Fra Paolo, shuddering. "And these are the men, who would free Italy from the tyranny of the Priests."

"In the midst of all their sufferings, and amid the cruelty of their enemies, the Pontifical soldiers remained firm, and even playful. I went with my friend, Antonio, into the church of Castelfidardo. The wounded were laid on the cold stones. There were nine-and-forty Zouaves, and among them the captain of the second company."

"Guelton, a Belgian. Lorenzo, was he wounded?"

"Ah, yes, poor fellow," was the answer. "He had received no less than three balls in his body, and cannot possibly recover. Besides several other Belgians, whose names I either did not hear, or have forgotten, there was one named Jaiguel, a boy of eighteen. I exchanged a few words with him; he had received a bullet in his arm. 'Then,' said he, 'my weapon fell out of my hand.'"

"Brave boy," said Victor; "he had left his studies to fly to the defence of the Holy Father."

"Who would have believed it, Fra Paolo?" continued Lorenzo; "they found plenty of matter for laughing and joking. A Zouave, for instance, who had been shot right through the body, was carrying on a lively dispute with a Piedmontese. I could not very well make out what he said, but it must have been something very amusing, for the other Zouaves also laughed heartily."

"That, no doubt," remarked Joseph, "was Trevaux de Fraval. He is an excellent young man, always lively; without a care. Talking, laughing, talking, forever, and always full of fun."

moved us most was, that all these young men should have spirit enough to laugh in the midst of their sufferings, as if they had been at some joyful festival."

"They have good reason," said Victor smiling, "their conscience is clear and peaceful, and death to them cannot but be an invitation to the great festival of Heaven."

Lorenzo remained for some time, taking of all the remarkable occurrences which he had seen and heard of at Loretto and Castelfidardo, and at nightfall he took Joseph and Martin with him to his father's house, where they were received with the warmest tokens of affection.

The family consisted of the parents and two children. The father, Luigi, was a peasant of middle age, and his wife, Bettina, was a little woman whose goodness of heart was expressed on her countenance, as was that of her husband upon his.

The two Zouaves were soon installed in their new home, as if they had belonged to it. They were greeted by the good news that the Piedmontese had already been spying about the Cascina and had now left the neighborhood for Ancona, so that there was little fear of discovery or pursuit.

When the fugitives lay down to rest, they thought over all which Lorenzo had told them of the fate of their comrades, and fervently thanked God Who had so signally preserved them.

Marietta's brother, however, had been unable to inform them of all the unworthy treatment inflicted by the Piedmontese upon the unfortunate prisoners at Osimo, Alessandria, Genoa, and elsewhere.

Four of our countrymen, Verechen, Herbaert, Callebaut and Lecroix (four of the five hundred and fifty men who, under the command of the gallant O'Reilly, had defended Spoleto for twenty hours against an army of fifteen thousand men), were carried prisoners on October fourth to Genoa.

"Hurried from place to place," wrote one of them, "we are now at Genoa, not knowing what is to become of us, shut up without linen, with torn clothes covered with vermin, without money or hope to return to our country."

This was the fate of but too many among their companions.

CHAPTER XVI.—PRISONERS AND FUGITIVES.

Happier than the greater number of their companions, who were rising in imprisonment, and victims to every kind of oppression on the part of their barbarous conquerors, Victor and his two comrades dwelt in rest and peace, one under the shelter of the Hermitage, the others in the Cascina of Luigi.

One day, towards evening, shortly after the battle of Castelfidardo, Joseph and Martin had gone to the Hermitage to see their wounded friend, when a knock was heard at the door.—Fra Paolo went hastily to answer it. "Who is there?" asked he.

"Poor strangers who have lost their way, and ask shelter for a few moments, and some information as to the country."

The Hermit opened the door.

"Zouaves," cried he joyfully, at the sight of three soldiers who stood at the threshold.

"They were three fugitives of the Papal army. 'Welcome,' said he, 'Fra Paolo bids you welcome.'"

He who had been the spokesman, followed the old man, who led him at once to Victor's room.

"My friends, I bring you new comrades."

The three Zouaves had hardly cast their eyes on the first who entered the room when they exclaimed with one voice—

"Van Gameren! Welcome, welcome!"

And Martin and Joseph rushed forward to shake hands heartily with their companion-in-arms. But the brave son of Antwerp quickly extricated himself from their hearty welcome to hasten to the bedside of the wounded man.

but am already better, and I have left my bed for a little while to-day."

Fra Paolo brought in a bench for them.

"Now tell the news to one another, while I go and prepare something for our new guests."

"But Leo," inquired Victor, "tell me first how has it been with you? Have you not been wounded?"

"Thank God, no, my friend; I have not received the slightest hurt, only I am deaf in my right ear. It is the fault of a bullet which shaved off a bit of my ear, and killed the man who stood at my side. What a scene! I saw almost all my companions fall, one after another. Our battalion is utterly destroyed. The poor Pope, he has lost his Dominions; the Piedmontese are everywhere victorious."

"Yes," answered Joseph, "but Ancona holds out yet, under the command of our glorious general. Lorenzo told us to-day that the Piedmontese have not hitherto succeeded on the land side in winning a foot's breadth from the wall."

"But, alas! it can but be the noble but hopeless defence of rights which must at last be overpowered by oppression, unless speedy help be afforded by those whose duty it is to defend the Holy Father's possessions."

"But tell us," said Victor, "by what means you and your companions escaped the hands of the conquerors?"

"It would be too long a tale to tell," answered Van Gameren, "were I to attempt to describe to you all that we suffered in that fearful flight. Enough to say that we were separated from our comrades in the retreat to Loretto, and having no hope to escape the enemy's pursuit, in any other way, we took to the mountains, where we concealed ourselves in caves and clefts of the rocks, living upon the remains of our provisions and on the wild herbs that we gathered. It was only in the night time that we ventured to proceed, and being unfortunately ignorant of the ignorant of the country, we lost our way, and when we thought that we were far on in the direction of Rome, we found that we had returned to the neighborhood of Loretto. We dared not venture to inquire our way, lest we should fall into hands that would betray us to our enemies. It was only the cross that marked the entrance to this Hermitage which gave us courage to ask a shelter here for a few hours."

"God has guided you well. Our good Hermit, who has taken care of us like a real father, will doubtless give you the best information as to the surest way of proceeding."

"I hope so," was the reply, "for our great desire is to get to Rome as soon as possible."

At this moment Fra Paolo came in to call them to the evening meal.

He gave his three new guests, whom he vainly endeavored to persuade to remain with him—at least, for that night—all possible information as to the best course to follow in order to reach Rome with the least exposure to danger.

"But why will you depart so quickly?" said he. "Stay, at least, till the morning, that you may have a good night's rest."

"Rome, Rome!" was the answer of the Zouaves.

Joseph and Martin joined their entreaties to those of Fra Paolo to persuade them to stay, but to no purpose; after a few hours' rest, Van Gameren and his companions bade farewell to Victor and to the rest of the occupants of the Hermitage.

"We shall join you in Rome as soon as possible," said Victor.

"Till we meet again, then—"

"Till we meet again, farewell, and a good journey!"

"Poor fellows!" said Victor, when they were gone; "I fear that without a guide they will never succeed in avoiding the hands of the enemy."

He was mistaken. Van Gameren and his two companions, though with great difficulty, made their way to Rome. For six consecutive days they wandered through the hills without food, without rest. The voice of nature called loudly for repose! the fugitives were nearly sinking under the fearful conflict with fatigue and hunger. Yet forward! forward! for the

Piedmontese were chasing them like wild beasts.

At the distance of two miles from Rome they were compelled to defend themselves against a party of the enemy's lancers, who were following them.

They reached Rome at last in a miserable condition. "You should have seen in what a state I arrived," wrote Van Gameren, on Sept. 26, in a letter to his brother, giving him a short account of the dangers which he had passed through; "my clothes torn to pieces—my beautiful Zouave uniform, which I received but a month ago, is utterly spoiled; happily they have given me another. I am too tired to write any more."

Your attached brother,
LEO VAN GAMEREN,
Sergeant."

Victor, meanwhile, seemed on the high road to recovery.

Thanks to the Hermit's skilful treatment, his wound was healed, and but for the weakness consequent on the loss of blood, he would already have attempted to reach Rome with his comrades.

But Fra Paolo would not hear of their departure.

"Later on," said he, "when Victor is stronger and the country is quieter, you shall go. The Piedmontese are still on the watch."

Their friends of the Luigi's Cascina were of the same opinion. The three Zouaves were compelled, therefore, sore against their will, to delay their departure.

One of their greatest troubles was the thought of the anxiety which their friends in Belgium were enduring as to their fate. They dared not venture to write them a line, lest their place of concealment should become known to the watchful eye of the enemy.

In other respects their lives were peaceful and happy amid the kind-hearted people with whom they lodged.

Lorenzo and Marietta, above all, delighted in their company.

The brother was full of admiration for Martin. The two new friends were inseparable, and however difficult it might be to understand each other, they talked together with a satisfaction which was pleasant to see. Lorenzo was never tired of admiring the giant strength of the Pontifical Volunteer.

"What a fine soldier," said he. "Martino, I should like to see you at work upon Garibaldi; you would teach him a lesson, I think."

Marietta, on her part, had no greater pleasure than to get Joseph to tell her about his dear fatherland, his tender mother, and his beloved sister.

"My sister is called Mary, like you," he said to her: "and she is about your age too."

"Oh, how I should like to know her."

"That will be rather difficult," said Joseph, laughing, "but when I go back to Belgium I will send you her portrait. I will tell her what good care Marietta and her family took of the Pope's poor volunteers, and then she will pray for you, for she is as pious and good as Luigi's children."

Marietta blushed at the unexpected praise.

"Is Belgium a beautiful country?" asked she smiling, in order to turn the conversation.

Then Joseph had to tell her about the Campine, and its peculiar customs.

Very often in the evening, when the day's work was over, they sat at the door of the Cascina for a little while to breathe the fresh air; and then Marietta sang with her brother, accompanying herself on the harp, one or other of these touching songs so often heard from the lips of the peasantry under the blue sky of Italy.

Then it came to Joseph's turn to sing the song of the Belgian Zouaves, in which Lorenzo and Marietta, as well as Martin, joined.

At last, when night began to fall, Joseph and Martin went in company with Lorenzo to visit Victor, at the Hermitage; and after his recovery he would sometimes return with them to the Cascina to spend the following day with his comrades.

Good Fra Paolo liked not that Victor's absence should be long. He had taken to him as

kindly as if he had been his own father.

Victor had opened his whole heart to him—his love for his parents, his father's errors, his sorrow over the old philosopher's blindness.

"Be of good courage, my son," said the Hermit; "your father will be converted."

"Oh, father!" answered young Morren, "may your words come true. I offer my life gladly to obtain it. But, alas! God seems not to accept my sacrifice."

"Be of good heart; perhaps the Lord has already heard you. At all events I venture to prophecy that sooner or later he will grant you your father's conversion."

After such conversations Victor would climb the hill against which the Hermitage was built, and direct his prayer to the Madonna of Loretto from its summit.

So strong a friendship had grown up between the three Zouaves and their host, that when the day in November had arrived which was fixed for their departure, every one in the Cascina was sorrowful.

Fra Paolo had left his Hermitage with Victor the evening before, and passed the night under Luigi's roof.

The young men had provided themselves as well as they could with weapons, for it was to be feared they would have to deal with some of the enemy's soldiers on their way.

Lorenzo was not to be dissuaded from his determination to accompany them to the boundary of the Papal States.

"I will not have you," said he laughing, "falling into the hands of the Piedmontese, after we, as you say have had so much trouble with you. It would not been worth while to take care of you for that. Now I know the whole country; I know the roads, the woods, the hills, the caves; I can guide you without difficulty."

He was not to be denied. Early the following morning, the four companions were ready for the journey, all in peasant's attire.

The parting was sorrowful. It was like that of children leaving their father's home for ever. Bettina and Marietta cried bitterly.

Luigi seemed exceedingly out of temper, he knew not with whom or why. It was his way of showing sorrow.

"The Piedmontese?" muttered he.

Fra Paolo stood leaning on his staff, and cast a glance of sorrowful affection upon Victor.

"Child," whispered he in his ear, "pray for the old Hermit, as he will pray for you."

The travellers fell upon their knees before the venerable old man.

"Your blessing," said they.

Fra Paolo raised his eyes to Heaven, and made the sign of the cross over their bowed heads. A last pressure of the hands was exchanged.

"Farewell!"

"Addio."

And they were on their way to Rome.

CHAPTER XVII.—THE END OF THE FREE-THINKER.

The names of Castelfidardo and the Crocette had echoed throughout Europe. The lips of all men were full of the fame of the Pontifical Martyrs, and of the shame of the godless conquerors.

The lion-like courage of the Volunteers, and the prudence of their brave leaders, the crushing superiority of the enemy's numbers, and the barbarity of their commanders, were the theme of every tongue.

Nevertheless, by what sorrows, what tears, what sighs was that glory accompanied?

Here, parents wept a son, snatched from them by the murderous bullet; there, sisters mourned a brother, of whom no tidings had been received; there, a husband or a bridegroom had fallen in the service of God, or a friend's heart was wrung by the loss of a friend.