

*Blessed J.B. de la Salle; Founder of the
Institute of the Brothers of the Christian ...*

Armand Ravelet

BLESSED
J. B. DE LA SALLE

FOUNDER OF THE INSTITUTE
OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS,

BY
ARMAND RAVELET.



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JESUS BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN.

**"He," says Jesus Christ, "that shall receive one such little child like these
in My name, receiveth Me."**

INTRODUCTION.

THE SAINTS IN HISTORY; MISSION OF BLESSED JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE.

WILL the day ever come when history will be written by the lives of the Saints, not merely the religious history of souls, but the political history of peoples, whose true leaders have been the Saints? For it is the Saints, and the Saints only, who see through the affairs of this world; it is they whose words, once uttered, keep on reverberating for ever; whose passage amongst men is not obliterated by the ever-moving wave of time; the Saints, and the Saints only, realize fully the designs of Providence on this world.

Instead of working on the outside, the Saints work within. They transform souls: first, their own, then, by their example, the souls around them, and finally, by their writings, those of generations yet unborn, thus exercising an undying influence on civilization.

Is it possible to ignore these great principles in France? Is there any other principle that can lead it through the maze of those facts that make up its national history? At every epoch, a Saint appears, and rises above his contemporaries: he sees farther than they do; he

judges all things from a higher stand - point. A strange blessing follows upon his every word and action. When time has swept away the achievements of his contemporaries, his works remain, and contribute to the greatness of his country. The history of Christian France begins with St Denis, and is carried on uninterruptedly to our day. We have first the Martyrs, who plant the faith with their blood; the Doctors, who defend it by their writings; the Solitaries, who go forth into the desert to practice its precepts and its counsels. In the fourth century, St Martin evangelizes the semi-barbarous people around him, and astonishes them by his miracles. In the fifth century, St Genevieve saves this same people by her prayers. Then Clovis advances with his Franks, and his wife, a saint, converts him; a saintly Bishop baptizes him, and with him his whole army. Thus was born France, the great Christian nation, and the sign of the sacrament will never disappear from her brow. Innumerable Saints soon arise on all sides, like so many new stars in the firmament: saintly Bishops, founders of dioceses; saintly Monks, whose cells are destined to be the cradles of many of our towns; saintly Virgins and Widows, whose traditions are as the fountain whence the women of France have ever since drawn their virtues. Here, we have St Gregory of Tours, who writes the first Christian annals of the nation; there we see St Radegonde, the great Queen of the sixth century, who casts off the royal purple to clothe herself in the monastic habit; in the seventh century, we have St Eloi, St Owen, St Faron, St Leger, ministers and councillors of Kings, and after them St Bathilde, the slave who became a Queen, and the Queen who became a Saint.

Then comes the age of Charlemagne, and the heroic foundations of a Christian constitution are laid in Europe. In the tenth century, when the Carlovingian royalty is crumbling to pieces, Odilon, Abbot and law-maker of Cluny, is raising monasteries where whatsoever deserves not to perish of the civilization of that period will be preserved. In the eleventh century, we see St Bruno choosing the mountain solitudes of Grenoble in preference to the canonry of Rheims. In the twelfth century stands forth St Bernard, the apostle of the Crusades, to be followed in the thirteenth by St Louis, the ideal type of the Christian King, and the patron of French royalty.

It would be impossible to enumerate the names and the works of all the Saints of France. Open its national history at every page,

and in every century, you will find the Saint that has stamped it with the seal of his genius and his virtues. And outside these giants, the lustre of whose fame defies alike the ingratitude of mankind and the hatred of the ungodly, we find a countless multitude of obscure labourers whose names are known only to God. The work they did is forgotten, but the result of that work remains. Faith had to be dropped seed by seed into souls. For this, thousands of sowers were needed, and they were found, and sent forth scattering the seed, and transmitting their unfinished task from generation to generation; some working singly under the inspiration of grace, others working in groups; some devoting themselves to evangelizing the poor, others to nursing the sick, others again to teaching the children of the people. Those who wanted help called in their brethren, who answered the appeal, and modestly set to do the task allotted them, accepting direction. Thus were founded those innumerable religious families who, despite a hundred years of revolution and persecution, are still ploughing and tilling the soil of France.

We are about to relate the origin of one of those religious families, one of the humblest in its aim, one of the most powerful by its works: that of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Its founder was a Saint. The Church has just adorned his brow with that crown.

Blessed de la Salle is one of the great figures of his time. He was born at the beginning of the reign of Louis XIV. Just as the King was at the zenith of his glory, Blessed de la Salle was preparing in silence and retirement the work whose future development he was assuredly far from fore-seeing. The foundations of it were laid in the very year when the King, blinded by pride, was contesting the privileges of the Sovereign Pontiff. A humble priest had set his heart and mind on teaching the Christian doctrine to the people just when the rulers of the people were beginning to forget or to deny its most vital truths. While the Revolution, which was to overturn the throne, was steadily advancing, this obscure priest was building up with his strong hands another monument which, to this very hour, has defied the Revolution itself, and continues to shelter thousands of children, and to teach them to know God and to love France.

We see around us men who are loudly proclaiming the right of

the State to bring up children and to impose its own teaching on them, in spite of their parents, in spite of the Church. One would fancy, to hear them, that they first invented schools, that hitherto the people have grown up in dense ignorance, and now, for the first time, are having a book put into their hands. This is one of those monstrous and absurd calumnies that it behoves us to fight against. Even in minds that pass for enlightened, we are constantly coming upon errors which must be refuted, not by words, but by actions. We are called upon to prove, for instance, that, long before the State gave a thought to the subject, the Church was actively devoting herself to the education of the children of the people. We must prove to demonstration that the Church had opened schools, drawn up plans, written books, dictated statutes, founded institutions, formed teachers, and created in all its parts that system of popular education, the initiative of which her adversaries would now fain attribute to themselves. These innovators are simply plagiarists. They are vaunting as their own invention what has been practised by the Church for centuries past; and it would be easy to prove, as we shall do later on, that the only effect of their intervention in these works has been to check their development.

It is impossible to mention popular education without the name of Blessed de la Salle at once presenting itself to our mind. Like Christopher Columbus, he belongs to a new world. He too was an explorer. It was his glory to discover in the unreclaimed solitudes of our society whole populations that were plunged in the darkest ignorance, savage tribes of another sort who had to be led out into the light. There were, of course, schools before his time, and there are other schools of a later date that were not founded by him; but he is none the less the central luminary of popular education, the architect appointed by God to build that portion of His Church. Before his time, we see zealous workmen, but labouring without unity; snatching isolated souls from ignorance, but not attempting to rescue the masses. Those who came after him borrowed his ideas, and adopted his plans. All the popular schools spread over the face of Europe are modelled on the type he created, and all that is best in our educational laws is but an imperfect imitation of his rules. He was the first to gather school-masters about him, and he cast them into a mould which was none other than

that of evangelical perfection. He requires that they renounce their name, their family, their fortune, even their will, in order to give themselves up more completely to childhood. Before presenting these precepts to them, he puts them in practice himself. In order to enter the Church, he renounces the honors of the world, where his birth and his talents prepared him an enviable place. Even in the Church, he flies from the honors that pursue him, and chooses in their stead this despised calling. First, canon of Rheims, then a humble school-master, he eventually becomes the head of a family which reckons innumerable children, and spreads its powerful branches over the whole world.

He was the first to found elementary pedagogical teaching. He constituted himself the law-maker of that mutinous little people who, while still lacking the reason of men, have all their passions. He mingled in wise proportions piety and science, wisdom and strength, rewards and punishments, and drew up a constitution so perfect, that it has stood for two hundred years without undergoing any notable modification. He found out and imparted to others the secret of conveying the first rudiments of knowledge to the most rebellious minds; he discovered and imparted the far more difficult art of conquering the most indocile natures, and melting the hardest hearts.

He was the first to write for ignorant little children. This learned Doctor, this theologian, contemporary of Bossuet and Fénelon, does not disdain to draw up and correct Alphabets, Catechisms, Manuals of Christian politeness— the smallest and humblest class-books of the poor man's child, but, at the same time, books that were destined to reckon hundreds of editions and millions of readers, and to exercise the mightiest influence on universal civilization.

He was the first to make French the basis of primary education, and he thus contributed largely to the knowledge and spread of the national tongue. In prohibiting the study of Latin to his disciples, he binds them for ever to the primary schools, and prevents these from eventually transforming themselves into colleges, and so once more leaving the people without educational establishments. He is, therefore, the creator, the true creator, of that primary education that we hear so much cried up in our own day. And he is at the same time its organizer. The greater part of the laws that govern it have been borrowed from his conceptions and his rules. He

found these by intuition, he put them on trial, and they developed more or less, according to the intelligence of his contemporaries, whom his genius outstripped.

He was the first to found, not only schools, but a teaching body of Christian masters, novitiates to train them, authorities to guide them, asylums to receive them when failing health no longer permitted them to work. To these principal foundations, he adds schools for children whose families cannot keep them at home; reformatories for bad children; Sunday schools for children in workshops, and finally seminaries for lay-masters, types of our future Normal schools. In fact, he endowed France with a sort of primary University, complete in all its parts, and anticipating by two hundred years that of our time, which it surpasses in perfection. Not alone has he given schools to France, but his disciples have given them to the whole world, thus assuring to his country that glory of which all the Christian nations are jealous.

Such is the man whose history we have undertaken to write.

His gentle and majestic figure stands out at the close of the seventeenth century. He crowns its splendor by works purer in the sight of the Church than those of Bossuet, more lasting than the conquests of Louis XIV., and he opens that eighteenth century which, but for him and his spiritual children, would have proved still more fatal to the good and the true. The schools that he founded are so many lightning-conductors which have preserved French society from complete and irreparable ruin. He saved France, and it is the duty of France to express to him her deep and enduring gratitude.

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Blessed de la Salle gets his grand-mother to read for him " the Lives of the Saints. "

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

PREPARATION.

A TRAVELLER, visiting Rheims, and seeking for some remnant of the ancient town amidst the new buildings of the modern one, will sometimes be tempted to loiter in the narrow Rue de l'Arbalète, before a large house whose battered remains still testify to bygone splendor. Above the ground floor there runs a wide frieze decorated with military trophies, amongst which is a broken escutcheon. Between two windows of the first floor is a deep niche, crowned with a stone canopy, and from which the statue has disappeared. To the right is a slender tower of three stories, inside of which is a winding staircase, while the outside is flanked with a stone buttress. On either side of the entrance door, are two stone statues, life size; one represents a man with a beard, and the other a woman wearing a broad belt crosswise. They will tell you in the town these two per-

sonages are Adam and Eve, placed there by the builder of the house in memory of Adam the flax-seller, a famous flax merchant of the fourteenth century. At that period, the Rue de l'Arbalète, which then bore the name of the Hempdresser¹, was in the centre of the linen trade of Rheims, which rivalled that of Flanders.

In 1651, the mansion in question was not inhabited by a merchant. It belonged to M^{me} Barbara Coquebert, widow of Lancelot de la Salle, who resided there with her second son, Louis de la Salle, King's Councillor at the presidial court of Rheims. It is, therefore, in this house that, most probably, the founder of the Brotherhood of the Christian Schools was born. His father lived there to 1664, and it is certain that his first years were passed there.

The family of de la Salle, originally from Bearn, was of ancient nobility— one of its ancestors being, it is said, grievously wounded in the ninth century when fighting for Alphonsus the Chaste. This story is open to discussion; but there is no doubt that the de la Salles sprang from a vigorous, Christian race.

This noble family was divided into several branches. The Champagne branch had carried on the profession of arms with great renown. In the fifteenth century, one of the ancestors of Blessed de la Salle, Menault de la Salle, was man-at-arms and Knight of King Charles VIII. He fought in Brittany under the Chevalier Bayart, and he took part in the expedition to Naples. His grandson, Lancelot de la Salle, came to settle at Rheims, and had two children who divided the family into two new branches.

The elder branch entered the magistracy, the younger went into trade. John Baptist de la Salle comes from the elder branch. Louis, his father, purchased the commission of royal Councillor of the presidial court of Rheims. In 1650, he allied himself to another family of magistrates; he married Nicole Moët, daughter of John Moët, equerry, seigneur of Brouillet, councillor at the same court, and of Perrette Lespaignol, his wife.

† The 30th of April 1651, his first child was born, and baptized the same day in the church of Saint Hilary, which no longer exists. The boy had, for God-father and God-mother, his maternal grandfather and grandmother, and received from them the name of John Baptist. This was the future founder of the Christian Schools.

¹ Rue de la Chanvrerie.

In the midst of this troubled age, where every man feels in the depth of his soul the reverberations of the agitation around him, we can hardly realize the tranquillity that reigned in the bosom of



House where Blessed de la Salle was born, at Rheims (p. 8). — Restitution by M. Ch. Fichot; engraved by H. Joffroy.

Christian families of the last centuries. Society, solidly established on its own basis, allowed individual lives to flow peacefully on, in an even tenor, uniform and pre-arranged. The eldest son followed his father's career, and contrived with the fortune inherited from

him to maintain the honor of the name, and to take care of any of his brothers who failed to make an independence for themselves. The other children might follow their inclination, some taking up the profession of arms, some entering the Church. Religious vocations were more frequent, not that they were imposed by the families, but because in those elevated Christian souls, untouched by doubt, the spirit of God breathed more easily and efficaciously.

The livelihood of all the children being thus assured, nothing troubled the peace of the domestic hearth. Families were numerous and united. The gloomy anxiety which weighs upon so many parents in these days was then unknown. There was then hardly any example of these sudden fortunes which kindle the flame of covetousness in the calmest breasts, nor of those instantaneous crashes which make the most solid positions seem insecure. Such violent disturbances might happen in Paris, at Versailles, amongst those launched in the vortex of court extravagances; but only in that world of perpetual excitement and extremes. The provinces knew hardly anything about them— and the provinces then were all France.

We do not want to paint in too seductive colours those remote ages, nor let it be supposed they were free from trouble. Fortunes were less divided than in our day. The upper classes were rich; the middle classes lived by their industry and grew wealthy; but the lower classes were poor and eked out a scanty living by following hard and trying trades. They found it difficult to rise above their condition, and from time to time famine swept over them and decimated them.

Hardship did not, however, apparently, make more victims than it does now, and, above all, it had not the horrible features that distinguish it in our age. It was poverty, not pauperism. It was frugal life, hard work, but bravely borne by serene souls and healthy bodies; it was not that mixture of vice and of revolt that agitates the lower classes and exhausts them more than any amount of privations could do. The peasant and the workman did not murmur then against the conditions in which Providence had placed them. They knew of no others, and it did not occur to them that there could be any other for them. The sphere of their ambition was limited, and no unreasonable longings troubled their placid labour. Moreover, the sunshine of faith threw its mild and tender

glow over these industrious toilers, and beyond this life they fore-saw another, where the inequalities of this one were to be made right.

Nothing is more consoling, more refreshing, than the account of Blessed de la Salle's childhood. We see him living in the bosom of his family, amidst the serious and austere habits of the magistracy in the seventeenth century. No boisterous pleasures disquiet his soul; no unseemly word tarnishes the purity of his mind, nor disturbs his faith. His days flow on smoothly, divided between prayer and study.

This calm exterior life deepened the natural gravity of his disposition. Of an open and loveable nature, young de la Salle gave early signs of rare piety. He did not care for the amusements of his age. His great pleasure was to make little oratories and altars, and imitate the ceremonies of the Church, and his greatest happiness was to be taken to church, where he assisted at the services with extraordinary recollection. Worldly gatherings had no charm for him. One day, all the family were assembled for a great feast. Their noisy merriment saddened young de la Salle; he drew his grand-mother aside and got her to read the lives of the Saints for him. According to one of his biographers, the predestined child loved passionately that beautiful, that incomparable book, and his mother was in the habit of reading it to him constantly. His father wished him to learn music, but the child had so little taste for the art, that the father did not insist upon it. He cared for nothing but the singing in church. He learned how to serve mass, obtained leave to be an altar-boy, and performed the duties of the office with such piety that all who saw him were edified. It is clear that already God was speaking to him, and that an interior voice was beginning to close his ear to all vain conversations. But his piety, far from being stiff or morose, was simple and sweet, and in no way took from the charm of his conversation, or the serenity of his countenance. It merely rendered him more conscientious in his studies, more docile to his parents, more affable to everybody.

It was not without a purpose that we recalled the ancient lineage of the de la Salle family, although the saintly founder of Christian schools renounced for himself all honors and nobility. The virtues and qualities of parents leave their imprint on the souls of their children. Like unto his ancestors, Blessed de la Salle was valiant,

and his life was a perpetual warfare. If he was not a soldier in the King's service, he was a knight in the service of God. He fought against unseen enemies, more formidable than enemies of flesh and blood, and he displayed as much heroism in exterminating evil and vices, as the head of his family ever showed in combatting the Saracens. Like his father, he had the sense of justice in a high degree, but he made use of it only to walk strictly within the lines of duty. He had a good right to bear the family arms.

Young de la Salle was therefore born to those possessions which most men seek and strive for all through their lives : birth, honors and fortune. Happily for him, along with these advantages, Providence reserved him others that were less perishable. He was born of a Christian family.

His maternal grandfather, following a custom which was very general amongst laymen at that period, recited his Breviary every day. His father fulfilled all his duties as a Christian, and the tender piety of his mother diffused its fragrance through her home. No wonder, then, that out of the seven children that God gave them, four consecrated themselves to His service in the Religious life and in the Priesthood. It was a noble reward, and a foretaste of heaven.

John Baptist had a brother, Joseph de la Salle, who in his early youth entered the community of the Canons regular of Saint Genevieve at Senlis. Having taken his degrees, he taught philosophy and theology at Blois; he was then named pastor of Saint Martin's of Blois, where he remained eighteen years, and afterwards became pastor of Saint Martin's of Chauny, in Picardy. He died four years after Blessed de la Salle.

A second brother, John Louis de la Salle, was, after John Baptist, Canon of the church of Rheims and seneschal. Notwithstanding certain doctrinal difficulties that he had occasionally with his brother—John Baptist remained always submissive to the Holy See, whereas Louis figured amongst the appellants—the latter was devoted to the work of the schools, and his name figures in the deeds beside that of his brother, for securing to the schools of Rheims the right over property which had been given them.

One of the sisters of Blessed de la Salle entered the Abbey of Saint-Étienne-des-Dames, of the Order of Canonesses of Saint Augustin, at Rheims.

The other children, two sons and a daughter, were married; but they upheld in the world those grand and noble traditions which had from time immemorial been the honor of the family. One of them, Peter de la Salle, succeeded to his father's office, and was like him counsellor of the presidial court of Rheims. His name should be inscribed amongst the benefactors of the schools, since he was universal legatee to all his brothers, and secured the transfer of such property as was deeded over to the schools of the Institute.

Towards eight or nine years of age, young de la Salle was sent to the University of Rheims, founded in 1554, and directed at this period by the rector Thomas Mercier. He soon made great progress, for he had quick intelligence, great love of work, and that ever present fear of God which made him attentive to all his duties. He gained at once the esteem of his masters, who were delighted with his docility, and the affection of his companions, who liked his amiable disposition, so that, after having been the model of children at home, he became the model of scholars in his class.

His piety, meantime, increased from day to day. His grandfather had taught him how to recite the office, and he practised this devotion with a pleasure altogether rare for a child of his age. He had acquired the habit of it long before he received the tonsure, and he never afterwards failed in it.

This fidelity in the service of God and taste for devotional practices were so many signs of a vocation. His family noticed this, and threw no obstacle in his way. Although his parents would probably have preferred that the eldest son should inherit the family name and fortune, they were careful not to stand between the spirit of God and their child, and there is no evidence of his having had the smallest opposition in obeying the Divine voice. Christian families are roots destined to produce Saints. These latter are the flower and fruit of that evangelical sap, which, after flowing down through generations, every now and then, blossoms out in certain privileged souls, that shed honor on the race they spring from.

The family of Blessed de la Salle were prouder of his vocation than if he had inherited the paternal office, and the Priesthood, though it debarred him from perpetuating his race, endowed him with a spiritual paternity that was one day to give him innumerable sons.

At eleven years of age, young de la Salle received the tonsure from the hands of the Bishop of Aulone, M^r Maleveau, in the archiepiscopal chapel of Rheims, March 11th 1662.

The then Chancellor of the University of Rheims was Peter Dozet, former Vicar General, Archdeacon of Champagne, and Canon of the cathedral for over fifty-three years. He was a man of great piety and wide learning.

He had noticed the happy dispositions of John Baptist, who was his relation. Old, worn out, feeling death at hand, he determined to leave his canonry to the young levite, convinced that the Church of Rheims would have reason to thank him for the choice. He gave in his resignation, which was accepted, and young de la Salle was named in his place to the twenty-first prebend, in 1666. He took possession of his canonry on the 17th of January 1667. He had not yet attained his sixteenth year. Peter Dozet died the following year.

The chapter of Rheims was one of the most illustrious of France. It numbered fifty-six canons, sixty-one chaplains, four priests and four sacristans. It had at its head eight dignitaries : the dean, a great archdeacon, the archdeacon of Champagne, a provost, a precentor, a treasurer, a deputy of the Bishop in matters temporal¹, and a professor of divinity. In 1789, thirty-three of its members had been Bishops, twenty had occupied the archiepiscopal see of Rheims, twenty-one had worn the Roman purple, four had sat upon the throne of St Peter, under the names of Sylvester II., Urban II., Adrian IV. and Adrian V., and they heaped privileges on the venerable body to which they had for a time belonged.

The Canons of Rheims wore a rich costume— in summer, a violet camail and the aumuce²; in winter, the large camail bordered with ermine. The Chapter took rank immediately after the Archbishop. Peter Dozet must have had great confidence in the solid piety and virtue of a boy of fifteen to create him a member of this illustrious body. But he had known the boy well and long.

He was not, however, sparing of advice to him on this account. " My little cousin, " he would say, " bear in mind that a Canon should be like a Cistercian Monk, passing his life in solitude and prayer. " And his little cousin never forgot this admonition. The

¹ He was known as the *Vidame*.

² A fur worn on the arm by certain Canons.

premature dignity with which he was invested was not without dangers of its own. There was the possibility of its smothering in the soft ease of an assured position the budding of the youth, and proving fatal to the higher vocation which was calling him to more arduous work. But the young Canon, on the contrary, only regarded his office as a heavier duty imposed upon him. He was regular in choir, punctual at prayers, and assiduous at work.



Costume of the Canons of Rheims. — Drawn by Fichot, from an enlarged seal of the Seneschal of the Chapter of Rheims, and following.

He began at once to prepare himself to receive the four minor Orders. Cardinal Barberini was then titular Archbishop of Rheims; but he had not yet been able to obtain his bulls, and the see was vacant. Young de la Salle received minor Orders on March 17th 1668, at the hands of M^r Charles de Bourbon, Bishop of Soissons.

Every new title that Blessed de la Salle received was regarded by him in the light of a new obligation, and a higher duty. According as he committed himself more fully and irrevocably to the service of

God, he felt the need of rendering himself more worthy. As a Canon, it was necessary for him to be learned in divine sciences, and fit to take his place amongst the eminent men who surrounded him. So the moment he returned to Rheims, he began to attend the classes of the University. He finished his studies in the humanities, and went through the two years course of philosophy necessary for obtaining the degree of Master of Arts, which he took very brilliantly in 1669.

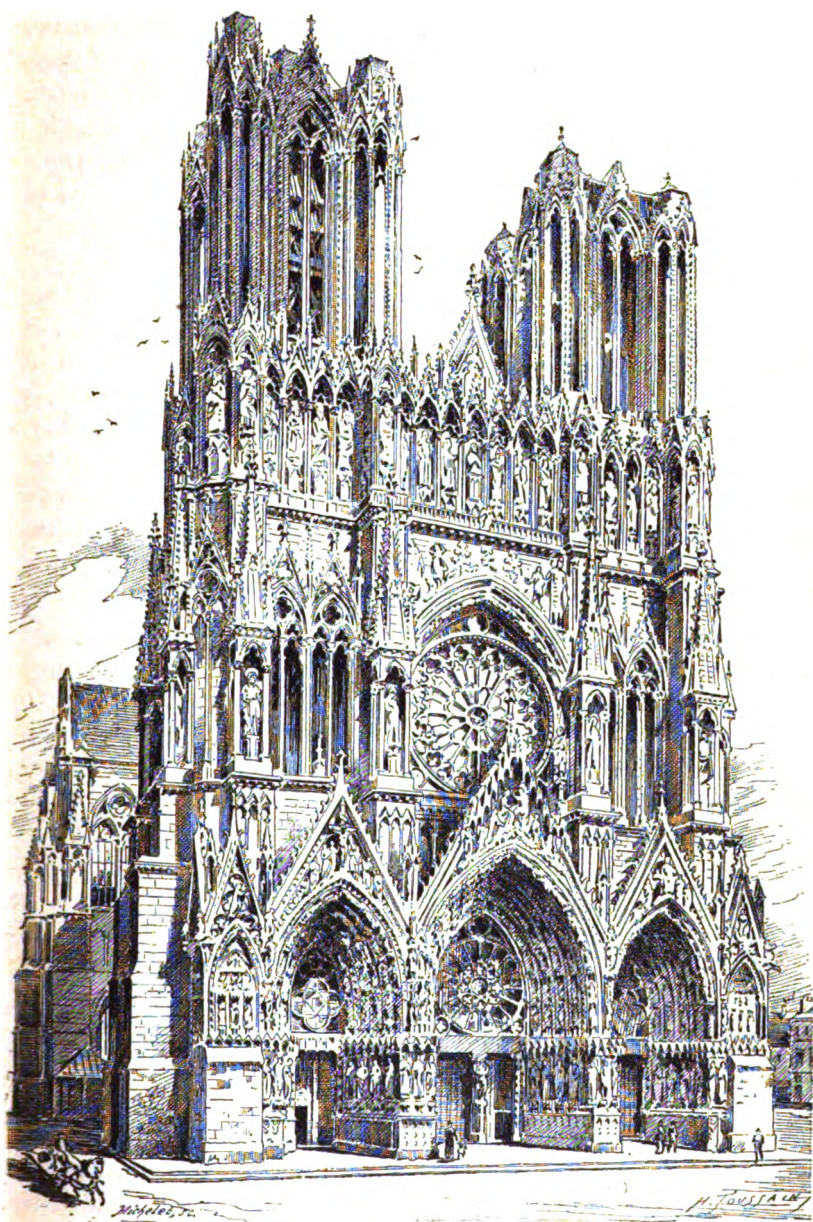
He was already too deeply versed in the secrets of Christian life not to understand that science has its dangers, and that to possess it without peril, we must not separate it from the love of God. In the midst of his studies, young de la Salle relaxed nothing of the assiduous piety which had formed the delight of his childhood, and began henceforth to give himself up to that practice of penance which was to be the sustenance of his life. As he did everything in secret, his humility carefully concealing from all eyes whatever might have raised him in the esteem of men, his austerities are hard to trace. It is his only known that at this date he slept on a bed that was more than monastic in its hardness, consisting as it did of logs of wood, in order to conquer the flesh, and not to lose in sleep hours that might be spent more profitably in communion with God.

His biographers say no more; but this one instance will suffice to show what the moral standard of his life was. We must be satisfied if we can lift one corner of the veil which covers the merits of the Saints. They love the hidden virtues above all others, those that are practised under the eye of God alone, and that men can only guess at, but never see.

The degree of Master of Arts which young de la Salle had taken was only the preliminary to the doctorship. His father wished him to pursue his studies in Paris, and looked out for a house where he would be safe from the perils which were sure to assail him in a city which was, even at that period, a hotbed of corruption and a centre of pleasure.

There was then in Paris, as now, an institution whose principal aim was to train good priests and prepare them for the apostolate by developing in their souls the interior life of Jesus Christ and His holy Mother.

This was the Institution of Saint Sulpice, founded towards 1649 by M. Olier, and solemnly approved in 1651, the year that Blessed



Cathedral of Rheims, where Blessed de la Salle was Canon. — Drawn by Toussaint.

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de la Salle was born. When young de la Salle entered the seminary, in 1670, M. Olier had been dead thirteen years; but his spirit lived there still, and the example of his virtues, still fresh in the memory of all, was guiding his successors in the way in which he had walked so admirably. M. de Bretonvilliers, who succeeded M. Olier himself, was then superior of the seminary, and M. Tronson was director.

The latter had a firm soul and an upright mind.

Trained by M. Olier, associated in his labors, the depository of his traditions, he had become an enlightened guide in the direction of young priests. The books he has left us on this subject are full of his own long experience, and that peculiar wisdom which comes only to those who are in the habit of dealing with the things of God. It was under him that Abbé de la Salle was at once placed. He had, however, as special director a man who, amidst that goodly company of great Christians, was distinguished by profound humility and that simple piety, free from all display, which is one of the characteristics of the Society of Saint Sulpice.

This was M. Baüyn. One incident, the memory of which has been preserved in the traditions of the seminary, will give some idea of his great perfection. Bossuet was one day paying a visit to M. Tronson, and the conversation fell on the Saints. The Bishop of Meaux complained that the age, grown sterile, non longer produced any. M. Tronson denied this, and declared that the Church was always fruitful, and that souls of the highest virtue were still to be found. He mentioned M. Baüyn, and extolled his deep humility. Just at this moment, some one knocked at the door. It was M. Baüyn come to consult his superior. The latter, who knew who it was, did not answer, and M. Baüyn contented himself with waiting in the next room.

When Bossuet was going away, he was still there; M. Tronson saw him, and, to give his visitor the proof of what he had been just saying, he turned on M. Baüyn, accused him of having listened at the door; he sharply upbraided him for such unseemly behaviour, and dismissed him. M. Baüyn offered neither denial nor excuse, but meekly accepted these immerited reproaches, so wounding to self-love. He bowed his head humbly, and withdrew, leaving his superior full of joy at his fidelity under the trial, and Bossuet confounded.

We relate this incident in order to exemplify the kind of direction that Abbé de la Salle received from M. Baüyn. The disciple was to follow in the footsteps of the master; we shall see him, also, silent under unmerited accusations.

M. Baüyn appreciated at a glance his hidden virtues; he felt himself drawn into sympathy with a soul that was in so many ways kindred to his own, and set himself earnestly to develop the treasures it contained. There sprang up at once between the two men a friendship which neither time nor events ever weakened.

When, later, M. de la Salle returned to Paris, he took M. Baüyn for his director; he consulted him in his difficulties and trials, and it is said that M. Baüyn, then broken down with age, used to come and visit him. If Blessed de la Salle did not come at once, M. Baüyn would kneel down in the garden, or wherever he happened to be, and pray while waiting for him.

Amongst the other ecclesiastics charged with the management of the seminary were M. Leschassier, who became director after M. Tronson; M. Baudrand, afterwards parish-priest of Saint Sulpice, and who called Blessed de la Salle into his parish because of the impression he retained of him; M. Charles Picoté, one of the first companions of M. Olier, and who kept up his traditions in the seminary, where he lived to the 1st of December 1679.

M. de la Salle made his entrance there on the 18th of October 1670. and his name may be read to-day on the register of admission of that period in the following terms— " John Baptist de la Salle, acolyte and Canon of Rheims."

Several young ecclesiastics who attained afterwards to high dignities in the Church were his fellow-seminarists. Amongst these were Jean Claude de Vertrieu, of Montdidier, who was Canon of Saint Jean of Lyons in 1680, and Bishop of Poitiers in 1702; Paul Godet des Marais, who became Bishop of Chartres, and always entertained a deep friendship for Blessed de la Salle; M. des Hayes, afterwards pastor of Saint Saviour's at Rouen, and who, by his influence, brought the Christian Brothers to Darnetal in 1702; M. Meretz, who became Canon of Nîmes, and established the Brothers at Alais; M. Canel, afterwards councillor-clerk at the Parliament of Grenoble; M. de Saléon, first Canon of Saint André of Grenoble, and who was promoted successively to the Bishoprics of Agen and of Rodez, and finally to the Archbishopric of Vienne.

Blessed de la Salle, in his humility, refrained doubtless from making any use of these numerous influential acquaintances; at any rate, there is no trace of his having ever done so throughout his history. They must, nevertheless, have contributed to draw the attention of many important ecclesiastics to his work from the first, and if, throughout the endless opposition which was woven into his very life, he found warm and solid friendships that stood by him during the ordeal and protected him against his detractors, we may seek the origin of them at Saint Sulpice, where he gave such an example of every virtue.

Abbé de la Salle spent a year and a half at the seminary. It is characteristic of ecclesiastical houses wisely governed, that good is done there without noise or display. In those mysterious retreats, far from the vain agitations of the world, the future soldiers of the Cross are trained in prayer and study. Those only who direct them know what light and strength they need in the battle of life, and in what triple armour their hearts must be encased before they can face the attacks which the world has in reserve for them. These weapons, they receive from their priestly education. Alone with themselves, under the guidance of experienced ecclesiastics who teach them how to sound the depths of their hearts, they come to know the world whose image they reflect within themselves. Their inward eye, made clear by prayer, acquires a singular power of seeing through the most complicated questions. In the habit of conquering themselves, they secure their future triumph over their external enemies, which are easily disarmed when they have not one's passions for accomplices. Divine truth, pondered on in their hearts, penetrates them wholly, and fuses heart and mind within them in a wonderful manner; the purity of the heart guarding the lucidity of the mind, the one giving its warmth in exchange for the light of the other, and both coöperating in vital works. Thus are formed those legions of priests whose virtues, hidden under the modest simplicity of their lives, are scarcely discernible to the outer world, but who, in reality, bear on their shoulders almost the whole burden of Christian civilization. They it is who receive the deposit of Divine truth, who preserve it pure from all alloy, who defend it against every assault, who keep it alive, and propagate it amongst souls; they it is who feed the fire of charity which produces good works, and almost all the good that is done passes through their hands. ✓

They restrain the impetuous, awaken the somnolent, bring back the wandering, uphold the weak, and continue that Divine apostleship which has been carried on for eighteen centuries.

The seminary of Saint Sulpice must have been an incomparable school for Blessed de la Salle, who was destined to become the shepherd of such a numerous flock. We know very little of his life there. The work of his education was silently done. This is the way of all seminarian life; humility drops her veil around it, and virtues, like flowers, put forth their buds noiselessly. The testimony of one of the professors in this blessed house shows us the impression that de la Salle made there during his short sojourn. "He was from the first," says M. Leschassier, "a faithful observer of the rule, and punctual at all the exercises of the community. His conversation was always gentle and decorous. He never seemed to me to have annoyed any one, or merited any reproach."

From a man so sparing of praise, such a judgment is full of eloquence. But what better than any masters testifies to the excellent education of Blessed de la Salle are his virtues. He showed throughout his life a firm and tender piety wherein we recognize all the characteristics of the direction of Saint Sulpice. He manifested on every occasion respect for Divine things, observed strictly all the rules of propriety, and gave himself up to his attraction for prayer. God was his refuge. In all his difficulties he had recourse to Him; He was the star that ever guided him through the storm and preserved him from shipwreck.

The life of the seminary, so conformable to his tastes, was not to last long for Blessed de la Salle. Less than a year after his entrance to Saint Sulpice, on the 20th of July 1671, he lost his mother, and this death was a deep grief to him. A few months later, his father was carried off. They both died at a comparatively early age, leaving him a large fortune to manage, and a numerous family to bring up— six children to whom he was henceforth to be both father and mother.

His father died on the 9th of April 1672; on the 19th of the same month, Blessed de la Salle left the seminary, and returned to the paternal mansion in Rheims, to take the direction of the family of which he was now the head.

He experienced at this crisis, not a temptation against his vocation—it had taken too deep root in his soul to be shaken—but a cer-

tain hesitation before binding himself in Holy Orders. He did not wish in so momentous a concern to follow his own lights; the way of obedience seemed the safest to him. With this feeling, he placed himself under the direction of a priest of great virtue and experience, Canon Roland.

Canon Nicolas Roland was born at Rheims, on the 2nd of December 1642. He belonged to a good and wealthy family. His father had been Commissary of war, and his mother, Nicole Beuvelet, was the sister of M. Beuvelet, priest at Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, who left behind him a great reputation for sanctity. Young Nicolas was educated at the Jesuits; he was afterwards received as Doctor at the Sorbonne, and returned to Rheims, where he was named Canon and theologian of the Cathedral.

He was a pious man, enlightened, detached from the world, seeking and commending poverty, humiliation and penance. He wore a hair-shirt and an iron belt, lodged in a wretched place, and deprived himself of everything approaching to luxury or comfort. He took in a certain number of young ecclesiastics whom he prepared for the priestly life, and whose studies and conscience he directed, so that his house was a kind of little seminary. Blessed de la Salle was not apparently one of his boarders, but he was amongst the most docile of his penitents and the most faithful of his disciples, and his life has many traits of resemblance in common with that of M. Roland.

The latter very soon discovered to what a perfect way the soul confided to him was called. He advised him to respond quickly to grace. This counsel, given with authority, put an end to the perplexities of young de la Salle.

Two months after his return to Rheims, he set out for Laon, in order to receive the first of the major Orders; but there was no ordination there, nor at Noyon, whither he hastened, so he was obliged to go to Cambrai, where he was ordained sub-deacon, on the eve of Trinity Sunday, in the year 1672. He was just twenty-one.

Blessed de la Salle never took a step backward in the way of perfection. When he had acquired the habit of a virtue, or adopted a salutary practice, he never gave it up, and no external circumstances could change him. At the Seminary of Saint Sulpice, he felt the value of a rule of conduct. He carried this principle into his own house, where he and his brothers observed a monastic regularity of

life. Rising and going to bed, work and prayer, recreations and meals were always at the same hour, and lasted a given length of time. The only fruitful lives are those that are thus regulated. They are a faithful imitation of nature, who is always methodical and rhythmic in her march. They are also the only free lives.

Thus did Blessed de la Salle pass six years of his life without in any way coming before the world. These years were, in reality, a continuation of his hidden life; the hour for manifesting himself before men had not yet come. It was not, on this account, a barren life that he was leading. He resumed his studies, which had been interrupted by the death of his parents. He would gladly have gone to Paris to finish them, but this desire was sacrificed to the primary duty of watching over the education of his brothers and sisters. He remained, therefore, at Rheims, and followed assiduously the classes of the Faculty of Theology; he took his degree of Licencié, giving to prayer and good works all the time that remained to him after his studies.

M. Roland, seeing the growing ardour of the young priest, feared that his office of Canon did not offer a wide enough field for his zeal.

He advised him, therefore, to enter the active ministry, and to exchange his canonry for a parish in the town. The parish-priest of Saint Pierre of Rheims was anxious to procure such an exchange for himself, and Blessed de la Salle, the moment he saw that it offered him a chance of being more useful, at once accepted it. But the consent of the Archbishop, M^{gr} Letellier, was necessary; and as he was just then in Paris, Blessed de la Salle set out for that city, to get himself ordained Deacon, and to submit his desire to the Prelate at the same time. The latter flatly refused to accede to it. He considered Blessed de la Salle too young to administer a parish, and he thought that it was too soon for him to abandon the direction of his family; consequently, he ordered both the pastor and the Canon to stay where they were. For the pastor, it was a sacrifice. Blessed de la Salle accepted the order with perfect submission. An interior voice whispered to him that he was not called to direct a parish, and he was glad to find that the orders of his superiors agreed so fully with the dictates of his conscience.

The pious Canon fulfilled with unfailing regularity all the duties of his canonry. He was assiduous at office, and in the ancient

sanctuary which had been the cradle of French Royalty, he took part in that public prayer which is the sign of enduring faith in France, and the proof of her power. In his own home, he gave long hours to prayer and solitary communings with God. He also continued his studies, for, in sacred science, degrees are onward steps, and do not mark limitations in the road of knowledge to be traversed.

With all this, he had leisure for charity. But charity, like science, knows no bounds, and to embrace it wisely, we need a guide. Here again Blessed de la Salle found one in M. Roland.

M. Roland had made a vow to consecrate himself to the education of youth, and to found free schools for girls. Going to preach the Lent at Rouen, he became intimate with Father Barré, a missionary, who was very much occupied with the elementary schools. After thinking over the matter, he had come back to Rheims to carry out his scheme.

There was just then at Rheims an orphanage of thirty children founded by a dame Varlet, and which the town persisted in refusing to take charge of because of the expense it would involve. M. Roland asked to be allowed to take it up and manage it, and the request was granted with alacrity. The unfortunate children were badly fed, badly clothed, in bad health, and utterly bereft of care. M. Roland immediately supplied them with all the necessaries, and henceforth his fortune was devoted to providing for them.

His solicitude extended beyond their temporal to their spiritual wants, and he watched carefully over their souls. Finding that the persons in charge of them were quite unfit for their office, being equally wanting in virtue and intelligence, he at once dismissed them, and applied to Father Barré for Daughters of Providence to replace them. Father Barré sent him Sister Franaisé, Superior of the house at Rouen, and two other mistresses of the same congregation. These were placed in charge of the orphanage. M. Roland appealed to some pious young women to come and help in the good work, and very soon a little community was formed.

M. Roland's zeal was indefatigable. Not satisfied with educating the children of his orphanage, he set his heart on educating the children of the town, and as soon as he had trained a few mistresses, he got permission to open free classes for girls in the orphanage.

A great number of young girls flocked in, and soon the school

was so crowded, that it was necessary to open others. The number of Sisters multiplied rapidly; M. Roland hired rooms in various parts of the town, where they went every morning and held classes all day. He also trained mistresses for the country places; but the orphanage, which continued to be the centre of the work, was wholly devoted to children, and took the name of the Community of the Holy Child Jesus.

This excellent M. Roland was anxious to perfect the method of teaching. Whenever he heard of a famous school in any place, he set forth to visit it, and to enquire into the system employed there. He sent for experienced mistresses to teach the Sisters, and procured a choice library for their improvement. He had little by little initiated Blessed de la Salle into this work, being the more desirous of attaching him to it, because, owing to his own weak health, he feared leaving the Community without a protector. According as the work grew, contradictions and hindrances grew with it. The school-masters were jealous, the town was indifferent, even the ecclesiastical authorities were mistrustful and ill-disposed.

In 1677, M. Roland went to Paris in order to obtain through the Archbishop the legal recognition of his community; but the Archbishop took no heed of his request, and let him wait in his anti-room without condescending to pay him the slightest attention. M. Roland came back to Rheims without uttering a murmur, and attributed his failure to his sins: "God had better take me out of the world," he said, "for I only hinder His work."

But all these obstacles did not wear out his charity; M. de la Salle had encouraged and supported him. He also felt a deep tenderness for these forsaken children, and he loved them as the Saints know how to love.

While he was laboring in this cause, he was preparing himself for the priesthood. He received it, on the 9th of April 1678, from the hands of M^{sr} Letellier, in the cathedral of Rheims, and it was in one of the Chapels of that same church that, on the following morning, he celebrated his first mass. He performed that great action with fervent piety, but without any outward show, fearing that external pomp might interfere with his recollection, and trembling lest he should lose a particle of the graces which abound in the soul of a man called for the first time to offer at the altar the sacrifice of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. He ever retained

in the same intense degree these sentiments of respect for this supreme prerogative of the priestly life. Faithful in the daily fulfilment of this duty, he allowed nothing to deter him from it. Even illness did not prevent him. When he was infirm, he still dragged himself to the altar, or was led there, and celebrated the Divine mysteries with such unction and piety, that the assistants were moved to tears, and more than once he was seen, after communion, motionless, like one unconscious and wrapt in prayer.

Eighteen days after his ordination, he lost his director, M. Roland. The latter, on his return from Paris, fell ill, on the 7th of April 1678, and after a terrible illness courageously borne, he gave up his soul to the Lord on the 27th of the same month, being only thirty five years old. In his last days, he appointed M. de la Salle his executor, and begged him to take care of the Community of the Sisters of the Child Jesus. He even gave him to understand that he believed him called to found a similar work himself.

Blessed de la Salle accepted courageously the legacy bequeathed him by his venerable friend. Nature shrank from it. He was afraid of letting his piety evaporate amidst the distractions of manifold occupations. He had been ready enough to devote some of his spare time to the Community of the Holy Child Jesus, but he had never dreamed of burdening himself with its direction. He owed it, however, to the memory of M. Roland not to let his undertaking fall to the ground, and he resolved to do what he could to secure and continue it.

His first care was to get the new work legally recognized so as to secure its position. This was no easy matter, for even M. Roland himself had failed to accomplish it. It was necessary to have the consent of the town, of the Archbishop, and to obtain letters patent registered in Parliament.

The administration of the town feared to impose the burden of a new Community on the citizens, the prudence of the Archbishop hesitated to approve officially a community that had scarcely had time to prove itself, and Parliament was not disposed to multiply religious congregations.

Blessed de la Salle took up the matter with his usual activity. He stirred up all his friends and relatives. He invoked the memory of M. Roland's virtues; he made much of the services rendered by the Sisters; he touched some, he convinced others, and ended by

obtaining the formal and written authorization of the magistrates of the city.

This authorization was granted on the following conditions :—
“ The Daughters of the Child Jesus were to keep four free-schools in the four quarters of the town, the orphanage of dame Varlet was to be joined to the new community, which was to take charge of it; the Superioress was not to receive an orphan without a ticket from the town lieutenant, who might withdraw the child at the age of seven or eight to place it in the hospitals; finally, the Daughters of the Child Jesus were never to be cloistered. ”

Blessed de la Salle promised to conform to these regulations, and this first victory gained over the obstinacy of the magistrates was the signal for a complete success. The Archbishop, hearing that the municipality had given in, pledged himself to obtain the consent of the King. He was the brother of M. de Louvois, and his influence was supreme. He had only to ask for the letters to get them; they were granted in 1679. The Archbishop had them registered at his own expense in the Parliament of Paris, and wished, moreover, to provide by his liberality for the future of a community which was a veritable seminary for school-mistresses. This community was therefore founded, endowed with a civil personality, recognized by the ecclesiastical and secular authorities, and, differing in this respect from other charitable institutions of Rheims, it had a priest, M. Rogier, an intimate friend of M. Roland's, for sole administrator and director. All M. Roland's wishes were realized.

Having thus paid the debt of gratitude he had contracted towards him while under his direction, M. de la Salle went back to his own quiet life, and resumed the course of his habitual occupations.



Blessed de la Salle's first mass.

CHAPTER II.

VOCATION.

AFTER the pious and industrious employment of the years of his youth that we have attempted to describe, Blessed de la Salle was ready to accomplish great things. He had strong faith to stand out against trials, an enlightened mind to carry an undertaking safely through difficulties, and he had above all good will. Without any fixed plan of his own, he stood ready before Providence like a good workman who awaits the orders of his master.

Over and above these valuable qualities, he had those gifts that shine before the world, and which were far from being of no account in the difficult mission to which he was called. He was rich, independent, and settled in a town where his family occupied an influential position. But that which human wisdom looks upon as a means, is often in the eyes of God an obstacle. Neither his fortune, nor his title, nor the influence of his relations was destined to be of use to his Institute. In laying the foundations of a work

that was to last so long, God did not see fit to make use of these perishable elements. He did not need them. One man, without money, without credit, without renown, provided he were faithful and of good will, sufficed; he even suited better, for he let the hand of the Divine Architect remain more distinctly visible through the lines of the edifice he was to build.

Blessed de la Salle was truly the workman that Providence meant to employ; but he had not yet attained the necessary perfection; he still held on to the world by a thousand ties that, unknown to him, enthralled his liberty. He would, moreover, have been frightened by the grandeur of the scheme he was to accomplish if it had been revealed to him as a whole. So gigantic an undertaking would have appeared to him beyond his strength, and he would have recoiled from it. But he was brought to see it by degrees. God, with that infinite delicacy which takes into account all the infirmities of man, revealed to him his work day by day. M. de la Salle began to occupy himself with the schools without suspecting the difficulties that lay before him. When he came to measure their extent, it was too late to draw back, and he had to make up his mind to go on to the end. This line of action we have now to relate in detail.

There lived at Rouen a lady who had formerly been renowned for her vanity, and who still continued to excite public attention by her extraordinary conversion. M^{me} de Maillefer was a native of Rheims, where she still had relatives and friends. After her marriage, she came to live at Rouen, where her husband was Supervisor of Accounts. She had been endowed with fatal gifts, gifts which are full of peril for Christian souls— birth, fortune, beauty and wit. Her ardent nature had not been able to resist the allurements that her position held out to her. She flung herself headlong into the vortex of pleasure, without heeding the abyss to which it led. No delicacies were too costly for her table, no gems too precious to adorn her beauty. Her one thought was to dazzle the crowd of her admirers. She lay a-bed till noon, in order, she said, to keep her mind undisturbed, and spent the whole day arranging new toilets. On Sunday, she went to the last mass, not so much to pray, as to show off her splendid dresses, and outdo the women who attempted to rival her. Such was the person that God intended to make use of for the foundation of Christian schools, and who was to provide the first means for establishing them.

One day, a beggar knocked at M^{me} de Maillefer's door. Those whose soul is vain and sensual generally have a hard heart— M^{me} de Maillefer sent the beggar away rudely. But he was weary and sick, as well as hungry, and his miserable aspect, which failed to move the heart of the mistress, excited the compassion of her servants. M^{me} de Maillefer's coachman took the beggar into his stables. He died there in the night. What was to be done? They must bury the dead man, and, consequently, reveal to their mistress the act of charity they had dared to perform. The coachman confessed what he had done; M^{me} de Maillefer, furious at his daring to disobey her, dismisses him on the spot, and then throws him a sheet to bury this corpse that encumbers her stables. The beggar was buried; but that same evening, on sitting down to table, she saw the sheet she had flung so contemptuously to her servant, folded and laid before her. She turned angrily to know why it was there: had the burial not yet taken place? Yes, it had. The beggar was in his grave; but he would not accept after his death a present from one who had refused him a crust of bread when he was starving, and a mysterious hand had brought back the sheet which the servants had seen wrapped round the corpse, and supposed to be under the earth.

This incident produced a deep impression on M^{me} de Maillefer. She recognized the hand of God in it, and, like St Paul on the road to Damascus, she was converted instantaneously. She made up her mind at once, and resolved to break off with the life she had been leading and with the world that had ruined her; she made this breach with resolute boldness. The following Sunday, she went to high mass at the parish, attired in her usual festive splendour, but wearing over her dress a kitchen apron, coarse and dirty. Nothing more was needed to lower her in the eyes of everybody who knew her; she was set down at once as a ridiculous devotee, and her friends all drew away from her: She had gained her object.

Her table was at once reformed, and all luxury banished from it. Vanity no longer held any place in her life. Her days were passed in the churches, at the foot of the Cross, or in the hovels of the poor. Her austerities were all the more incomprehensible in the eyes of the world from the contrast they formed to her past life, and she became the laughing-stock of the society whose idol she had so long been.

Her husband, who was charitable, without going so far in the way of perfection; her director, who was an enlightened man, sought to moderate a zeal which seemed to them exaggerated. She yielded with a good grace to their advice, but endeavoured to make up by secret penances for those that she renounced externally. Not long after this, her husband died, and she was left absolute mistress of her fortune and her conduct. Nothing henceforth arrested her in the path of penance. She used to prostrate herself in the mud before the Crucifixes on the roadside. She used to kneel for hours at the doors of the churches, amidst the poor whose supplications she had so often spurned, accepting alms like them, and sometimes vituperated for taking her share of the pence thrown to them by the faithful as they passed. She, who formerly dwelt in a sumptuous mansion, now lived in a miserable little unfurnished room, where her only bed was a bundle of straw; her food consisted of mouldy bread and rancid soup, that she ate reflecting bitterly on the former waste and luxury that dishonored her table. A scarf of black linen replaced the fine pearls that used to adorn her neck. Her eyes, that had gazed only on vanity, were now melted with weeping, and her unkempt hair suggested only contrition and grief.

For fifteen years, it was believed at Rouen that she had gone mad, and she did nothing to remove an error that gratified her humility; but people began, at last, to perceive the heroic virtue that was concealed under this excentric exterior. They found that her large fortune, none of which was spent upon herself, was now given to the poor, and devoted with rare wisdom to doing good. The folly of the Cross shone out through the folly of the world, and, after passing for a lunatic, M^{me} de Maillefer passed for a Saint.

The neglect of the children of the poor in their tender years was one of the forms of wretchedness which most attracted her solicitude. Father Barré was at Rouen at this period, and was beginning to put into execution a plan he had long cherished for the education of young girls. He also was to lend his hand to the foundation of the Christian schools. He was certainly one of the most esteemed advisers of Blessed de la Salle in the beginning of his undertaking, and had considerable influence over him. But, unlike M^{me} de Maillefer, Father Barré had always led a calm Christian life, and advanced towards perfection by the straight road.

Born at Amiens in 1620, thirty years before M. de la Salle, Father

Barré entered in early youth the order of Minims, founded by St Francis of Paule; he was professed there, and during many years he taught theology with brilliant success. He was eminently pious, and stimulated every one around him to do good. His thoughts on Christian life were always expressed in strong and striking language, and he made use of the simplest things in daily life as images and symbols to illustrate the highest counsels of evangelical perfection.

The stamp of his direction is visible in the soul of Blessed de la Salle, and we shall constantly find him, in the various phases of his life, remembering and practising Father Barré's maxims.

Father Barré had been called from Paris to the convent at Rouen; he had spent fifteen years there, and had long and earnestly considered the best means of teaching the poor. Towards the year 1666, he finally made a beginning. He assembled some charitable women, trained them, and sent them to found free schools in three neighboring towns. Some months later, he opened four others in various quarters of Rouen.

The town's people were religious, and very charitable. Members of the clergy, Councillors of Parliament, barristers, interested themselves in the new work, and contributed funds towards its support, in spite of Father Barré's resistance, for he feared riches. The town of Rouen in this way came to be endowed with a seminary for school-mistresses which was to branch out all over Normandy.

M^{me} de Maillefer had been actively zealous in laying the foundation of the schools, and success inspired her with the desire to establish one at Rheims, her native town. She made acquaintance with Canon Roland in one of his visits to Rouen, and contributed towards the foundation of the community of the Daughters of the Child Jesus. This, however, did not satisfy her zeal, and she wished to found a similar school for boys. She confided this new idea to M. Roland, who approved of it, and they concerted together as to the means of realizing it, when the death of the holy canon seemed to put an end to the whole scheme.

But M^{me} de Maillefer resolved not to give it up, and God having taken one helpmate from her, she at once set about finding another.

There was then at Rouen a pious layman named Adrien Nyel, who had interested himself in the children of the poor all his life. He was a native of Beauvais¹, and had apparently been called to Rouen by

¹ Not the city of Beauvais, but a village of the same name in the diocese of Laon.

M. Laurent de Bimorel, administrator of the hospital. In 1657, he was appointed, at a salary of a hundred francs, to instruct the young men of the Office in Christian doctrine, to teach them to read and write, and at the same time he had to look after the house. Later on, he occupied himself with the children who were serving as apprentices, or placed out as servants. He found out some poor laymen who, for the meagre remuneration of fifty francs a year, undertook to be at one and the same time teachers, sacristans and infirmarians, under the direction of the Relieving Office. They called themselves Brothers. Piety was the sole motive of their vocation, and, without being bound by any vow, they generally remained faithful to it.

M. Nyel held a somewhat independent position in the Office, and was greatly esteemed. He was intimate with one of the administrators of the hospital whom we have mentioned, M. Laurent de Bimorel, who, before his death, bequeathed to the establishment a considerable income to keep up two charity schools, of which M. Nyel was named director for life, being also lodged and boarded in the house.

M. Nyel's whole life had thus been passed amidst children, and it was unanimously agreed that he was the best man to found schools at Rheims. Being of an enterprising nature, he accepted M^{me} de Maillefer's offer, and set out for Rheims. He was then fifty-nine years of age. Before leaving Rouen, he gave to the Relieving Office a sum of thirteen hundred francs for the poor, on condition that the Office should pay him a hundred francs annuity, and have prayers offered up for his soul after his death.

M^{me} de Maillefer signed an engagement to allow him a salary of one hundred crowns¹ for his support and that of a lad of fourteen that he took with him. She gave him, moreover, letters of introduction— one for Blessed de la Salle, to whom she was related, and another for the Superior of the Sisters of the Child Jesus, whom she had known at Rouen, where that Religious had directed the Community of Providence.

M. Nyel arrived at Rheims armed with M^{me} de Maillefer's instructions, but never dreaming of the great work of which he was to be the first instrument. Blessed de la Salle himself was far from thinking then of the schools.

¹ An *écu* (crown) was worth three francs.

More than once, charitable persons had endeavoured to turn his zeal in that direction, but without success. Educated in an exclusive society, of refined manners and intellectual conversation, he felt little interest in those school-masters, who were men of obscure condition, narrow minds and rough manners. If any one had foretold to him that he would one day be their father and their friend, and that his life was to be spent in evoking and directing the self-sacrifice that was hidden under those rude exteriors, he would have scouted the notion. But God glories in sending His grace to overcome nature, and compel it to act against inclination.

Blessed de la Salle was, moreover, a humble and docile soul. He thought very little of himself, he did not trouble himself as to the mission appointed him, nor peer curiously into the future, but strove simply to do his duty from day to day.

When Canon Roland, his director, spoke to him about the community of the Child Jesus, he took an interest in the work out of deference for its founder. Later, he interested himself in it to fulfil the last wishes of a dying man; but he viewed it in the light of a passing incident that was not destined to take a lasting place in his life. As soon as he got the community legally recognized, he considered that he had done all that was to be expected of him.

He had, however, kept up friendly and confidential intercourse with the Superioress of the Community. One day, he went to see her, and, as he reached the door, he found a stranger there in the act of knocking. The stranger had come from Rouen, bearing letters for the Superioress, whom he wished to consult on a matter of importance. M. de la Salle allowed him to pass in first; but in a few minutes, he was himself sent for by the Superioress, who begged him to assist at the interview. The stranger was M. Nyel.

Blessed de la Salle listened with great interest to his plan, but at a glance he seized all its difficulties. A new foundation interferes with vested interests, knocks against the general indifference, and meets a host of natural enemies in all those narrow-minded persons who set their faces against anything they have not themselves invented. The girls' school had not been founded at Rheims without difficulty; but the boys' school was likely to provoke far greater opposition. The official school-master would see his authority threatened; the magistrates would tremble at the prospect of new taxes on the town; the kindness of the Archbishop was likely to have been exhausted by

all he had done for the Community of the Child Jesus. All these reasons must be weighed and discussed in secret, before rousing the opposition that was inevitable. It was necessary that the arrival of M. Nyel, and above all the object of his visit, should be kept a profound secret.

M^{me} de Maillefer had desired him to go and stay at the house of her brother; Blessed de la Salle dissuaded him from this. "In going to M. de Maillefer's house," he said, "you proclaim your scheme, and in proclaiming it you foil it. Your residence there will excite suspicion as to the motive of your coming. The wide social distance between you and your host will set people wondering what brings you here as his guest. They will ask questions, and gossip, and you will be the butt of all the idle busy bodies of the place; your every step will be watched and pried after, and when it is found out what you are seeking, every door will be shut against you."

Blessed de la Salle was so convinced of the truth of what he urged, that he offered M. Nyel hospitality in his own house, in order to screen him from the inevitable consequences of being M. de Maillefer's guest. "Come to me," he said; "my house is an inn where ecclesiastics are in the habit of stopping. You look just like a country pastor; you will easily pass for one. At any rate, I have a right to lodge whom I choose. I don't care what people think, and still less what they say. You can easily pass a week in my house unnoticed. This will give you time to reflect, to look about you. You can then make a pilgrimage to Notre Dame de Liesse as you intended, and, on your return, you can make an attempt to open the school."

M. Nyel accepted the hospitality that was thus kindly offered to him, and wrote to M^{me} de Maillefer to announce the good beginning he had made. Meantime, Blessed de la Salle consulted Almighty God, his guide in all things, for although he heartily approved of the undertaking, he knew not how to set about it. Mistrusting his own lights, he resolved to submit the difficulty to some pious ecclesiastics of the town, amongst others, the Reverend Father Claude de Bretagne, prior of Saint Remi, and afterwards prior of the abbey of Saint Germain-des-Prés, in Paris.

They met at the house of the pious Canon, and held private conferences to examine into the affair. M. de la Salle's advice was to confide the school to a parish-priest who would be zealous enough

to take the management of it, discreet enough not to talk about it, and generous enough to support it. After reflecting well on this vital point, Blessed de la Salle was of opinion that they ought to address themselves to the parish-priest of Saint Maurice, M. Dorigny, a man of zeal, firmness and piety, and whom they all judged capable of ensuring the success of the venture, if he would consent to undertake it. Everybody agreed that this was sound advice, and all begged M. de la Salle himself to open the matter to M. Dorigny.

Works that are in God's design, in spite of the trials they have to pass through, meet with extraordinary helps at their birth. The hills are levelled to make way for them, and one feels that the spirit of God moves souls towards them. It so happened that M. Dorigny was thinking of opening free schools in his parish, when Providence sent him both the man and the money wherewith to carry out his design. He received the overture with joy, and insisted on having at his table both M. Nyel and the young companion who assisted him in the class. M^{me} de Maillefer's annuity sufficed to cover all expenses, and the school was opened in 1679. It was the first kernel of the Christian schools, and M. de la Salle, having helped it on so successfully, considered his interference and responsibility at an end.

Again he was mistaken. Providence, seeing how faithful he was, had no intention of curtailing his destined mission, of which this first achievement was only an outline. He was obedient to grace, and grace was about to lead him whither he knew not.

M. Nyel had kept up constant intercourse with Blessed de la Salle. He often came to see him, consulted him in his difficulties, and sometimes wanted little services which the kindly Canon rendered him with pleasure. Neither the one nor the other had any future plans, or dreamed of any future partnership.

A few months later, a pious lady of the parish of Saint James, M^{me} Catherine Leclerc, widow of M. Antoine Levêque de Croyère, heard about this school of Saint Maurice, and conceived the idea of endowing her parish with a similar one. She was rich and childless; she was dangerously ill, and wished for nothing better than to devote part of her fortune to good works.

M. Nyel, who dreamed only of foundations and of seeing his dear schools planted everywhere, heard of her wish, and hastened to see her. He laid his plans before her, explained what steps were to be

taken, and, to strengthen her further in her good resolutions, he assured her that M. de la Salle, who had consented to be the protector of the Saint Maurice school, would lend her his help.

But when Blessed de la Salle heard this, he did not show the promised alacrity to coöperate in the new venture. He was of opinion that the work ought not to be too widely diffused before it was consolidated. He did not wish, however, to be an obstacle in the way of a good work, so he went to see M^{me} de Croyère, who was anxious to talk the matter over with him.

She congratulated him on the good he had done in the parish of Saint Maurice, and implored him to second her wishes:— “ I must profit by this favorable opportunity, ” she said, “ for it is already some time since God first put this thought into my heart, and I should be greatly comforted to see it carried out before I die. ”

She offered an annuity of five hundred francs on her income for the foundation, and to leave at her death a sum of ten thousand francs to secure it after her. Blessed de la Salle could not withstand these earnest entreaties. The terms were accepted, and M^{me} de Croyère died six weeks later without having enjoyed her good action. Her heirs carefully carried out her intentions, and the school was opened in the month of September 1679. M. Nyel himself took charge of it, having placed other masters at the head of the Saint Maurice school.

The new school was soon as flourishing as the first, and later on, the parish of Saint Jacques itself, which inherited M^{me} de Croyère's rights, pledged itself legally to give the Brothers the interest of a capital of ten thousand francs.

So the schools rose by degrees, and Blessed de la Salle found himself committed, so to speak, unawares. He has left us a charming account of his own feelings and the way that Providence worked to compass the purpose it had in view. “ It was, ” he tells us in one of his Memoirs, “ through a meeting with M. Nyel, and a proposal of M^{me} de Croyère's that I was led to take charge of the boys' schools. I had no idea of doing it. Not but that it had been proposed to me. Several friends of M. Roland's had tried to persuade me into it; but they could not get it into my head, and it did not occur to me to undertake it. If I had even dreamed that the care I took of the masters out of pure charity would one day

lead to my living with them, I would have given up the whole thing at once; for, as I naturally looked on those whom I employed in the schools, especially in the beginning, as far beneath me, the mere thought of having to live with them would have been intolerable.

“ I felt a great repugnance, indeed, when they used to come to my house for the first two years. It was apparently, on this account, that God, who does all things gently and wisely, and does not as a rule force men against their inclinations, brought it about so imperceptibly and gradually, that one engagement led me to another, and I found myself committed to the entire care of the schools without having foreseen anything. ”

M. Nyel was the nominal superior of the dawning community. He taught the class and managed the children well; but he was much less skillful in managing the masters.

Active, too active perhaps, often absent travelling, always full of new plans, he was not the one to inspire recollection in the masters and that spirit of regularity that is essential to the fostering of vocations. Blessed de la Salle saw these defects, and strove to make up for them. He could not but feel interested in a community which he had been chiefly instrumental in founding. He went there frequently, and was helpful to it in many ways. There were five masters for the two schools, and they were all lodged in the house of the parish-priest of Saint Maurice; but the house had now become too small for so many people; they were ill at ease in it, and their means were very straitened, the resources of the community all told consisting in M^{me} de Maillefer's three hundred francs and the five hundred of M^{me} de Croyère, whereas they would have required at least a thousand.

Blessed de la Salle could not, without being moved to pity, see the wretched plight of the poor masters. It occurred to him that the best way to help them would be to hire a house close to his own where he could lodge them, and have food carried to them from his own kitchen, and thus greatly reduce their expenses. He consulted M. Nyel about the plan, and the latter having approved it, he hired on a lease of eighteen months a house behind Saint Symphorien, near the rampart, not far from his own, and installed the masters there on the 25th of December 1679.

When they were settled in their new abode, Blessed de la Salle

wrote out a rule for them, so that their life might be well ordered, and their work and hours well proportioned. He fixed the hours for rising and going to bed, for prayer, for meals, and he used continually to look in to assure himself that the rule was duly observed.

Meantime, M. Nyel had improved the opportunity by opening a third school in this new house for the children of the district, and it was soon as full as the other two.

So passed the year 1680.

All this time, Blessed de la Salle was going on with his theological studies at the University of Rheims. He passed his examinations, maintained his theses, and in 1681 received the Doctor's cap at the age of thirty. Science seemed to be removing him farther and farther from that primary popular education which was to absorb his life. "I imagined," he writes in his Memoirs, "that the direction of the schools and the masters, being merely an exterior direction, committed me to nothing more than providing them with the necessaries, and taking care that the latter acquitted themselves of their duty with piety and assiduity." He was mistaken; the care of them was to be his exclusive occupation, and these very studies that he was pursuing with so much ardor, were only to be of use hereafter in guiding him to direct the rising Institute, and to preserve his future disciples from the theological errors into which sectarians would one day try to ensnare them.

Insensibly, Blessed de la Salle was being rivetted to the school-masters.

Although he found them uncouth in manner, he admired their good will, and considered them as emissaries charged to bring souls to Jesus Christ. It behoved them, therefore, to form themselves on that model, and he labored indefatigably to make them perfect. He could not, however, devote as much time to them as they required. The canonical office took up a portion of his day, and, added to this, he had his hours for study, his own business, his family, and could only attend to the masters in odd moments, as it were by stealth.

He thought it all over, and saw that there was nothing for it but to let them take their meals at his table, instead of having their food carried out to them; the expense to him would be the same, and he could utilize the hour spent at table. Having decided that this was

the best plan, he at once adopted it. The school-masters came and sat at board with him twice a day. One of them read aloud, and the holy priest took advantage of this to make them a little discourse on the duties of their calling.

This growing intimacy, and the rapid way the schools were encroaching upon his life, began to cause his family some anxiety, and they remonstrated with him. "Such work," they said, "was not fit for him; he was letting himself be absorbed by it to the neglect of more imperious duties. Before busying himself about strangers, he owed himself to his brothers who lived with him, and on whom he had no right to force such company." Blessed de la Salle made no answer to this. The good he was doing the masters was manifest, and not to be relinquished. He was bound even to prefer it to his own benefit, and to try and make this work fit in with his other duties. He already began to find the hour of meals too short, and to reckon up all the stray moments during the day that he might turn to account for the masters if they were near him. Yet he hesitated still to take them altogether into his house because of the opposition he was sure to encounter.

Just at this juncture, the town of Guise, which is next to Rheims, manifested a great zeal for charity schools. M^{lle} de Guise had opened three for girls, and had applied to Father Barré for mistresses. The aldermen wanted others to be founded for boys, and as they heard of those in Rheims, they went to M. Nyel, and begged him to come and organize some in their town. M. Nyel could not resist such an invitation. In vain did Blessed de la Salle represent to him that he could not absent himself, and compromise for an uncertainty a work already founded, but still weak, and leave the young masters without direction; such a line of action could not draw down God's blessing, and so rash a venture could not succeed. But M. Nyel was not to be moved from his purpose.

His absence, he said, would be short, and he could not miss so good a chance as this. He started off, accordingly, in Holy Week of the year 1681, reckoning secretly on Blessed de la Salle replacing him. The latter could not, indeed, make up his mind to leave the young masters without supervision, even for a few days. They rose at five o'clock, made their meditation, and heard mass at six. He wished that, on coming out of church, instead of going home, they should come to his house, and spend the day there, except

during the class-hours when they were at the schools. All the rest of the time they were with him, eating in the same refectory, each receiving his portion, and performing all their duties at a fixed hour until night prayers, when they went to their own house to sleep.

This lasted for eight days, when M. Nyel came back from Guise without having founded his school; but, in this interval, Blessed de la Salle had discovered in the lives of the masters certain grave disorders to which a prompt remedy must be applied if the work was not to fall to pieces. There were many drawbacks attendant on M. Nyel's wandering life. He acknowledged it himself without seeing his way to mend the evil, and seeing the marked improvement that had taken place in the masters during the week they had been under Blessed de la Salle's direction, he besought him to take them into his house altogether.

The holy man was grievously perplexed. The lease of the hired house was nearly run out, and expired on the feast of St John the Baptist. Should he renew it, or take the masters into his own house? It was a serious matter to decide. Not only would it involve a complete change in his own daily life, hamper him with new burdens, extra fatigue and anxiety, but it would arouse the anger of his friends and the opposition of his family. What a battle he would have to fight to make them consent to it!

He could not decide without taking advice, so he set out for Paris to consult Father Barré, who was living in a convent of his order in the Place Royale. After passing fifteen years at Rouen, Father Barré had returned to Paris in 1675, and had founded schools there. The first was opened in 1677 in the parish of Saint Jean-en-Grève, and he had founded at the same time a seminary for school-mistresses. There were thirty of them, and they went every day to hold classes in the parishes of Saint Eustache, Saint Laurent and Saint Louis-en-l'Île.

Father Barré had also interested himself in the education of boys, but without success. He gathered into the parish of Saint Gervais a certain number of Brothers who had fallen into evil courses, and ended by deserting their calling.

Blessed de la Salle laid before him the state of the schools at Rheims; told him how he had been imperceptibly led into taking the direction of them; explained the results that had been obtained,

and the difficulties that had still to be overcome. On hearing all this, the saintly Religious no longer hesitated. He saw clearly now why it was that he, who had put his hand to this work, had not been able to found it. Blessed de la Salle was the man destined to accomplish the mission, and the very obstacles in his way were so many means to the end— for God makes use of trials to strengthen the souls of His workmen. Father Barré left nothing undone to carry this conviction into the mind of the future founder. “ The grandest designs of God on a soul, ” he said, “ are only achieved through contradictions. Exterior and interior trials and afflictions slaughter nature, but they invigorate the soul. As you could get no wine out of the grape without crushing it in the wine-press, neither can a soul produce any great work until it has been in the wine-press of temptations, persecutions, tribulations and afflictions. The perfect Christian ought to be like the cock on the church steeple, that turns with every wind without ever coming out from under the cross¹. ” Blessed de la Salle was deeply impressed by these counsels, and left Paris with his mind fully made up.

On the 24th of June 1681, the feast of his patron, St John the Baptist, he took the whole Community into his house. This final step exasperated his family to the last degree, and excited the wonder of society beyond all bounds. Up to this point, it had been possible to hope that his scheme would not go beyond encouraging a useful work, as any good man might do; he had directed souls, as in duty bound by his priestly office, but this had not absorbed him to the detriment of all other occupations; now, however, the secondary work had suddenly become the principal, almost the exclusive one. He gave himself up to it wholly; he seemed to have no other concern on earth but to direct school-masters. The world laughed at him, the world does not understand the beauty of Divine work, and knows not what charity is. It laughed at this man of good Birth who demeaned himself to such low company; at this Doctor who sought the companionship of poor teachers whose business was to point out *a b c* to children, and who knew little more than their pupils. In fact, people were almost scandalized to see a Canon stooping to such an office. As to his family, their indignation knew no bounds. They were humiliated, and injured in

¹ *Spiritual Maxims*, by Rev. Father Barré, p. 26.

their dearest interests. They had dreamed of Church dignities for M. de la Salle, honors to which his birth and his talents naturally called him, and they now beheld him giving himself up to work which could bring him neither honor nor profit.

Blessed de la Salle, guardian of his brothers, was the eldest and the head of the family. His other relations were in the habit of dining with him at stated times, and these repasts were an opportunity for talking over the family interests and affairs, and keeping alive concord and affection amongst all the members. These meetings, formerly a source of Christian recreation and delight to Blessed de la Salle, were now a trial and a suffering to him, for his relations took the opportunity to upbraid him concerning his absurd purpose. As soon as they began on this chapter, he would fold his arms on his breast, and listen with the patience of an angel, answering nothing.

The arguments they brought forward were not of the kind that could influence him, or shake his determination. What did it matter to him that the school-masters were men of low birth, if they were servants of God; that their manners were coarse, if their conscience was delicate; that they made a poor figure with their black coat and thin white collar, if they filled a great function?

But the unceasing reproaches of his family made some impression on his brothers, and two of them left him. The eldest, who loved him tenderly, would not separate from him, and continued to live in the same house. The second went away and took up his abode with a brother-in-law; the third, who was younger, was removed and placed at school with the Canons regular, at Senlis. This grieved Blessed de la Salle, but it did not discourage him. All the ties that bound him to the world were being broken, one by one, in order to make the final breach easier. He felt himself freer. But suddenly a terrible trial was sent to him: he began to doubt.

At the very moment when he was sacrificing the affection of his family and the approval of the world, he asked himself if he was not pursuing a phantom, and if the work he loved was not going to vanish from him like a shadow. The masters that M. Nyel had brought together, and who had grown used to an independent life while he directed them, would not bear the regularity which Blessed de la Salle exacted from them. The greater number had no vocation; M. Nyel had taken them here and there, as chance

offered, without discernment. When they found themselves in a house as regular in its rules as a monastery, where they were treated like Religious, after having stipulated simply to be school-masters, they slunk away, one after the other. A few had to be dismissed as incompetent, so that in a short time the house was almost empty. Only two masters remained faithful.

This exodus was a terrible blow to Blessed de la Salle. His work seemed on the point of perishing. After having braved the reproaches of his relatives, the criticisms of his brother priests, and the malignity of outsiders, he was going to find himself with nothing left but his shattered scheme. He held on bravely, he prayed, and, lo! before the end of the year 1682 new subjects began to arrive. Blessed de la Salle had already put in practice the exercises that are still followed in the Institute, so the new-comers could have no illusions. They knew what they were committing themselves to, and understood the obligations they were about to contract. By their piety and their aptitude for teaching, their self-devotion and spirit of community life, they showed that they were chosen of God.

Blessed de la Salle continued more devoted than ever to them. He was like the courageous laborer who hesitates to put his hand to the plough, but who, once the ploughing is begun, drives his furrow straight on, unmindful of stones and thorns. He lived with the masters, and strove to fashion them more and more into a religious community. Without imposing practices on them as one in authority, he made them feel the necessity of them, inspired them with the desire of prayer and self-denial, and led them to embrace observances which seemed to be their own suggestion rather than his. Finally, when a resolution was adopted, he saw that it was faithfully carried out, and was the first to set an example of constancy.

In order to train all these souls of such varied callings and with such opposite dispositions, to cut and fashion them like stones that are to fit into a noble and solid building, a great unity in spiritual direction was necessary. The choice of a confessor was even more important than the choice of a superior. Blessed de la Salle made the masters understand the necessity of all confessing to the same priest.

They sought a fitting one long and earnestly; but the right man

was not easy to find : one was good and capable, but he had not the right spirit, and disheartened the Brothers; another was all they wanted, but he lived too far off, and so on with many others. These repeated failures at last determined them to appeal to M. de la Salle himself. He was their superior, their father; he lived with them, and knew, as no one else could know, the point they had started from, and the one for which they aimed. He was both firm and gentle, and he had their whole confidence. They besought him to become their director. He, however, hesitated long before consenting; he feared that difficulties might arise from the functions of temporal superior and spiritual director being united in one person. He took counsel with several enlightened ecclesiastics, who advised him not to be deterred by this scruple. He yielded, therefore, to the desire of the masters, and while he lived remained their confessor.

At Christmas tide in the year 1681, M. Nyel left Rheims. He was delighted at the improvement he saw in the house, and, judging his presence no longer necessary there, he gave himself up with a clear conscience to his passion for travelling, and set out to found new schools. Blessed de la Salle was now left quite alone in the direction and management of the house at Rheims.

About this time an event occurred which brought him to the brink of the grave, and increased still more his confidence in God. He was riding home from the country; the snow lay thick on the ground, filling up the ditches and blotting out the roads. M. de la Salle lost his way, and fell into a deep hole. He called out for help; no one came. The place was lonely as a desert, the bad weather kept all travellers away. He strove in vain for a long time to get out of the pit; night was coming on, his position was hopeless. He had recourse to God, and God hearkened to his prayer. After a last violent effort, he succeeded in climbing up to the level ground, and found his way, but not without bearing ever after traces of the danger he had run; he received internal injuries which were a source of suffering to him all his life, but which served chiefly to keep alive in his heart the remembrance of the mercy God had shown him in rescuing him from a certain death. He never spoke of the circumstance without profound gratitude.

Blessed de la Salle had remained hitherto with his disciples in the house of his fathers; but it was ill adapted to its new destination,

and was situated in too frequented a neighborhood, where the stir of business and the gay world disturbed the school-masters. The holy priest looked out for a quieter abode, and after a good deal of trouble found one at the entrance of the Rue Neuve, opposite Sainte-Claire, in the faubourg Saint-Remy, which answered his purpose; so he hired it, and the community moved into it on the 24th of June 1682, the feast of his patron, St John the Baptist. The Brothers never afterwards left it.

In leaving the paternal house, Blessed de la Salle broke off with his past. He said good-bye to the memories of his childhood, to the joys of his youth, and to all that had surrounded his life up to this time. He had now moved farther away than ever from his kindred, his friends and the world, and he was advancing towards an unknown future with no guiding star but his love for God.





CHAPTER III.

SACRIFICE.

By his fidelity to grace from the earliest years of his life, Blessed de la Salle had deserved to be called to the highest duties. He had kept his youth free from sin, and, in taking orders, he consecrated himself wholly to God's service. And, lo! God, to reward his generosity, had come and taken him by the hand, and had, without his knowledge, confided to him an incomparable work, the Christian education of childhood.

The mere strength of human nature did not suffice for such an undertaking, and one man, whatever might have been his genius and his perseverance, would not have compassed it. It needed more than courage, more than genius : it needed sanctity.

Blessed de la Salle, before undertaking his great work, had first to accomplish a work on himself. He had still to purify his life, which he had preserved thus far in piety and the fear of God. He was to rise from the easy virtues of youth to the more arduous duties of evangelical perfection, to renounce honors, fortune, family affections, his own inclinations, in order to give to these poor children whom God confided to him, a heart no longer held captive by a single earthly tie.

Grace had called M. de la Salle : this we saw in the last chapter. M. de la Salle corresponded to grace by a complete sacrifice of himself : this is what we shall see in the following pages. Nothing could be more interesting than the object of such a narrative, rather of such a drama.

The Christian schools, once solidly established in Rheims, began to spread beyond their centre, like those plants which, having taken root, put out fresh branches on every side. In many towns, the municipalities and the clergy, struck by the necessity for organizing education for the poor, were deterred by the difficulty of finding masters. The fact that Rheims had excellent ones soon became known in the neighboring districts, and the desire arose to obtain others like them.

Rethel was the first town that made a demand for them. In 1682, the aldermen and the parish-priests addressed themselves to Blessed de la Salle, and begged him to found a school in their town, promising to furnish the necessary funds. The holy priest hesitated. He feared that too rapid a growth might exhaust his new-born Institute, and that by developing too quickly, it might perish away. In order to confide the direction of schools to masters removed from under his own watchful eye, it was necessary that the masters should have gained strength in their vocation by a long novitiate, and he only had at his disposal young men of still uncertain vocations and untried virtue. He was, therefore, inclined to refuse, at least for the present, all proposals from without.

He rightly believed that in the life of every foundation there are two periods : a period of preparation during which the elements are fermenting and organizing, and a period of expansion when the sap rises, and circulates, and produces fruit; in other words, the hidden life and the public life, the movement of concentration and the movement of propagation. Such is, in fact, the law which regulates the development of all created beings, from the plant up to man; and it applies equally to works, and those works that ignore it run the risk of dying of inanition. We have seen only too many and too striking examples of this.

Blessed de la Salle had, however, reckoned without M. Nyel, whose impatience could ill brook these delays. His way was to go as far as he could from one foundation to another. He volunteered to go off at once to Rethel and manage the whole thing by himself.

Soon a new and weighty influence was brought to bear on M. de la Salle : this was the Duc de Mazarin, who strongly supported the demand of the aldermen, and offered to contribute to the maintenance of the masters. After this, there was no holding in M. Nyel. He set out to Rethel, hired a house, and the Duc de Mazarin, the parish-priest and a charitable person named M^{lle} Bouralletti, gave the necessary funds. The school was opened in 1682. The sympathy it met with gave Blessed de la Salle the idea of buying a house at Rethel soon afterwards for the purpose of establishing his seminary there.

But the schools were not to go on flourishing without obstacles. It was necessary that their basis should be solidly established, and the trials of their founder were, in a measure, the price to be paid for their development. M. de la Salle, having gone to Rethel, the Duc de Mazarin, who held him in the greatest esteem, wished to make his acquaintance; he honored him with a visit, and proposed to him to raise an annuity on the ducal domains to secure the support of several masters. Blessed de la Salle gratefully accepted this advantageous proposal. The contract was settled; but some ill-disposed mischief-makers meddled in the affair, and it fell to the ground. The pious Canon suffered the disappointment without a murmur. He knew that, according to Father Barré's maxim, " we must, in order to arrive at humility, be very glad not to succeed even in the concerns that God gives us to do for His own glory. "

Some time afterwards, two rich inhabitants of Rethel died, and left him a considerable sum, to make the foundation he had in view; but no sooner had he got all the necessary deeds and titles in hand, then the heirs refused to carry out the will. Blessed de la Salle gave up the legacy rather than go to law about it.

This never-failing patience ended by triumphing over the most obstinate resistance, and carried him through all difficulties and opposition. In 1685, M. de Mazarin took up the scheme which had fallen through some years before at Rethel. He gave a capital of three thousand two hundred francs, the interest of which was to go to support a community of young men who were preparing to be school-masters. This community was under the management of two directors named by Blessed de la Salle, and dates from 1685.

On the 22th of September of the same year, a similar foundation

was made on the estate of the Marquis of Mont-Cornet, and M. de Mazarin contributed three burses to the establishment.

Soon after Rethel got its school, the town of Château-Portien said it must have one. On the 20th of June 1682, the dean of the aldermen wrote to Blessed de la Salle to ask him for masters. The letter was so pressing that M. de la Salle answered it the same day:—

“ Even if I took but little interest in what concerns the glory of God, I should be very hardened not to be moved by the earnest prayers of your dean and by the obliging manner in which you have done me the honor to write to me to-day. It would be very wrong of me, Gentlemen, not to send you masters, seeing your ardour and eagerness for the Christian education of your children. I beg you, therefore, to believe that I have nothing more at heart than the seconding of your good intentions, and no later than next Saturday I will send you two masters, with whom I hope you will be satisfied, to open your school the day after the feast of St Peter. ”

The promise was punctually kept, and the school opened. The town of Guise again came forward. The year before, M. Nyel had gone there, but he had failed to found a school. He had scarcely been six months at Rethel when Guise called him back, and was ready to accept all his conditions. The aldermen gave the house, and M^{lle} de Guise paid the salary of the masters. M. Nyel found some one to replace him at Rethel, and came to put the new school in working order.

Next came the town of Laon. The aldermen, the parish-priest of Saint Pierre and the Abbot of Saint Martin had all coalesced to start this noble and useful enterprise. The town gave the house, and provided part of the salary; the Religious and the parish-priest furnished the rest. M. Nyel at once came flying to Laon, and, having placed the Guise school in safe hands, took the management of this new one, which he continued to direct for two years: a considerable time for him to remain stationary, who was always moving from place to place. But from this centre his solicitude reached out to all the neighboring schools, for Blessed de la Salle would only undertake the direction of those at Rheims. He had numerous other occupations. Over and above the duties of his canonry, the Archbishop, who knew his zeal, employed him sometimes in divers missions. Then in 1684, the Vicars general of Rheims sent him to convert a neighboring little town that had fallen away from all relig-

ious practices. He undertook the mission, and owing to God's blessing, he succeeded in it.

M. de la Salle held to doing thoroughly everything that he undertook, and therefore he followed the wise principle of not undertaking more than he could accomplish. Towards the end of the year 1682, it seemed to him, he tells us, that God was calling him to take charge of the schools, and that, as he had to be first at all the exercises of the community, he could not be as assiduous at the Divine office as was expected of him. For the first time, it occurred to him to resign his canonry. But this was an important step not to be lightly decided on. He prayed, and reflected long before making up his mind.

The reasons which suggested it weighed more heavily each day on his awakened conscience, and others came to re-enforce them. Symptoms of discouragement were appearing amongst his disciples. They were bearing up under the present, but the future terrified them. What was to become of them when they were old and infirm? When they should have worn themselves out in work without pay, were they to die of want? After a life of toil and privations, nothing but inevitable starvation awaited them. Blessed de la Salle in vain strove to revive their confidence. He reminded them that God never abandons those who put their trust in Him, and proposed to them the parable of the lilies, that spin not, and that God clothes; of the birds, that reap not, whom God feeds. But the hearts of the Brothers were deaf to his words; even the Gospel could not strengthen their faltering courage.

What made M. de la Salle's counsels and exhortations of so little avail was that he himself preached more by word than by example. One day, at last, the Brothers spoke out, and exposed all their anxieties to him. Confidence, said they, came easy enough to him, because he wanted for nothing. He had a good canonry backed by a good patrimony. Want could never overtake him, and the ruin of the schools would leave him unharmed. But what was to become of them, who had neither property, nor income, nor trade? How were they to go on living?

These reflexions finally decided Blessed de la Salle. He understood that on his side, as on theirs, the foundations of the Institute must be poverty and absolute abandonment to God. Duty seemed now clear to him.

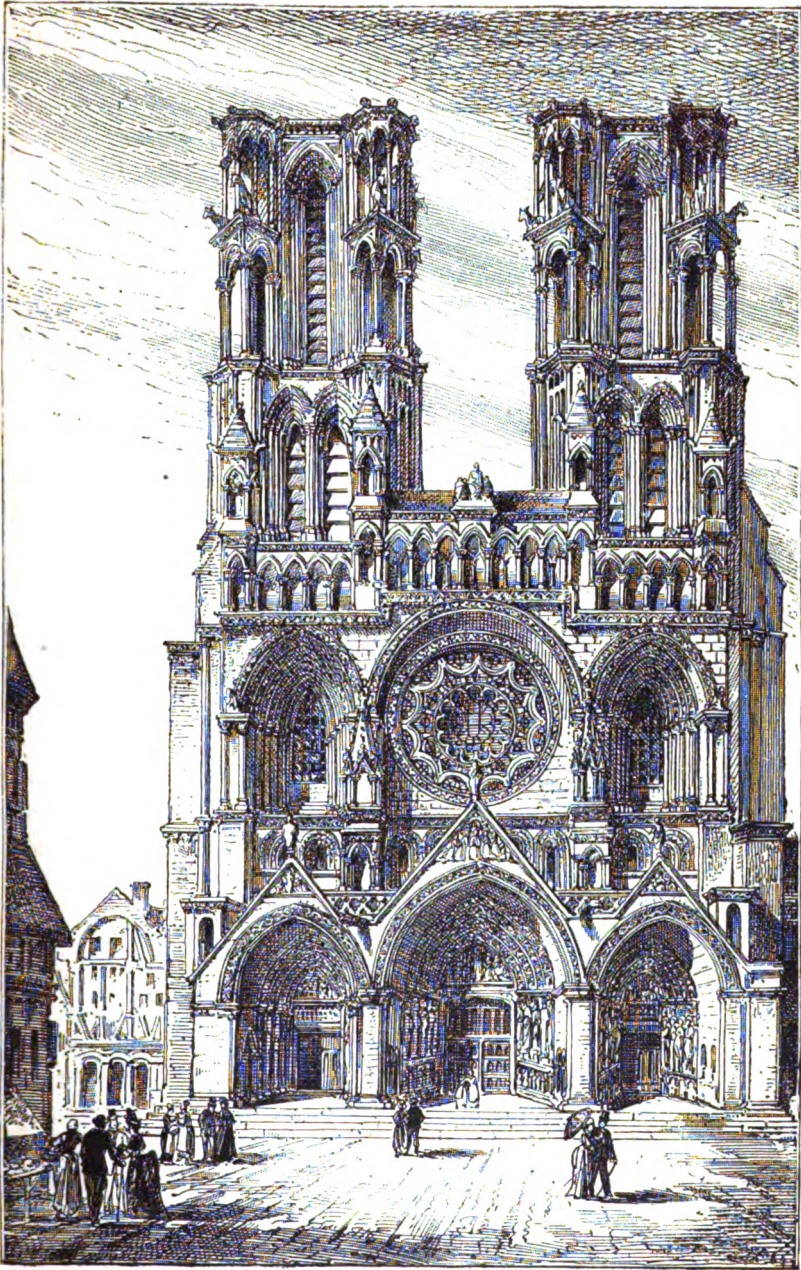
The two functions were manifestly incompatible. He no longer hesitated between the two. The one was easy, honorable and lucrative; the other was an obscure calling, as yet uncertain, without honor, and without profit. He made his choice of the latter, and resolved to resign his canonry. He at once communicated his resolution to his director. The latter combated all his reasons, blamed his plan, and ordered him to give it up. "Such a determination," he said, "was most likely the result of a caprice, and an ecclesiastical career was not to be upset in that fashion without long and serious reflexion. If it was the voice of God that was making itself heard in his soul, it would end by triumphing over all human resistance. Meantime, he must wait and consider." This was the voice of wisdom.

Blessed de la Salle submitted humbly; but he could not command his thoughts, and the reasons that had led to his determination pursued him incessantly. He could not make the days be long enough to furnish time for all his duties; he could not, above all, prevent the masters from contrasting bitterly their precarious condition with the state in which he lived. Some months went by like this. He then made another effort to convert his director to his views; but again the latter desired him to wait.

He waited; but, considering it necessary to have recourse to several opinions in so important an affair, he went to Paris to consult Father Barré, whose interior light he had already had occasion to appreciate. Father Barré fully and unreservedly approved of his design. He would have wished it even more perfect, he would have wished it to include absolute detachment from all the things of this world.

"The foxes have their dens," he said to him, "and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of man has not whereon to lay His head." Those are the words of Scripture, and this is what they mean: The foxes are the children of this world who attach themselves to earthly things; the birds of the air are Religious who have their cells for a shelter; and school-masters, whose vocation it is to teach the poor after the example of Jesus Christ, should have nothing more on earth than the Son of man had."

These arguments made a deep impression on Blessed de la Salle; they seemed to him as the voice of God, and even his director at last was conquered by them, and withdrew his opposition.



The cathedral of Laon. — One of the most ancient and complete types of Gothic architecture of the first period.

Notwithstanding the secrecy with which he had surrounded his intention, it eked out, and created an extraordinary sensation in the town. Astonishment soon gave way to blame, and a sort of league was set on foot to prevent the pious Cañon from carrying out his design. His relatives, his friends, his brother Canons, his superiors, all coalesced against him. His family were furious at his giving up a post which reflected honor on them; his brethren were grieved to lose a man whose high qualities they esteemed; his superiors, who had found him a useful auxiliary, regretted his services. No arguments were spared to shake his determination. "He was about," they said, "to renounce duties consecrated by the Church, for a perilous undertaking the success and duration of which nothing guaranteed. Had he not formerly recognized the vocation which called him to be a Canon, and was it no longer possible to please God in that holy state? Moreover, if he was doing good now, it was at the expense of others. By this extraordinary step, he was throwing discredit on his family, and might injure the prospects of his brothers. Was perfection really to be found in this uncommon way, or was not a secret pride leading him to it? He wanted to be singular, to found an order, to wear a habit that would attract attention, and this was a serious temptation where souls more perfect than his had perished."

Blessed de la Salle hesitated before these grave reasons, and before the unanimous opposition of those whom he loved and was accustomed to obey. His soul had to face one of those conflicts which decide the destiny of a life-time. His past rose up before him, and clung to him to hold him back.

He entered into himself; he probed the depths of his heart before God, and found it pure. He weighed the reasons that had guided his resolutions with those that were now put in the balance against them, and found these wanting. He came victorious out of this final struggle, his courage strengthened, and ready to carry out his resolution without further delay.

It was the month of July 1683. Blessed de la Salle set out to Paris to place his resignation in the hands of the Archbishop of Rheims, who was there just then; but he did not see him; the Archbishop had gone back to Rheims. Blessed de la Salle went to Saint Sulpice, and saw M. de la Barmondière, the parish-priest; he related to him the history of his undertaking, and the pious

ecclesiastic was so charmed with it, that he made him promise on the spot to send him two Brothers at once. This was the breaking of the dawn.

On his return to Rheims, Blessed de la Salle went to the Archbishop's house; but he was refused admittance. Powerful influences had been brought to bear on the Archbishop to prevent his accepting the holy priest's resignation; and not knowing how to refuse his consent, the prelate preferred not to see him.

Blessed de la Salle was not to be shaken by this new resistance. He went to see M. Philbert, one of the Superiors of the seminary, and who had great influence with the Archbishop, and laid his scheme before him. M. Philbert entirely approved of it. Then, unwilling to do anything without God's help, Blessed de la Salle went to the Cathedral, prostrated himself before the Blessed Sacrament, and remained several hours absorbed in prayer, imploring God to enlighten him, to strengthen him, and to accomplish the Divine will in him. Two persons saw him come in looking very depressed, and were witnesses of this ardent prayer. "It is M. de la Salle," said one of them; "pray for him, for he has lost his reason." — "You are right," replied the other, who was aware of his sanctity, "but it is the reason of this world that he has lost."

When Blessed de la Salle rose up from his knees, his prayer had been heard. He left the church, went straight to the Archbishop's, and was let in without any difficulty. The prelate asked him if he had sought advice before adopting so grave a determination. M. de la Salle replied that he had consulted M. Philbert. The prelate immediately sent to fetch the latter from choir, and far from belying Blessed de la Salle's words, the worthy Canon declared that he had advised him to give up his canonry to his brother. "He may give it to whomsoever he likes," replied the Archbishop; "I accept his resignation." That evening, he signed the acceptance.

The Archbishop was undoubtedly sorry to lose so good a Canon, and manifested in the presence of several persons the pain it caused him; but he showed no reluctance before Blessed de la Salle, thus sparing him all the distress of answering arguments or regrets. The great obstacle had been removed, and God had smoothed it in order to make the sacrifice easier. The holy priest was so filled with joy, that on returning home, he assembled the Brothers, and sang the *Te Deum* whith them in thanksgiving. Like St Bruno of yore, who

had also been a Canon of Rheims, and who gave up the office in order to embrace a more perfect life, Blessed de la Salle was free to go whither God called him.

M. de la Salle loved his brother tenderly, that brother who had remained deeply attached to him, and who, when the others had turned from him, had clung the more closely to him. In leaving him his canonry, Blessed de la Salle would simply have paid him a debt of gratitude by providing for his future. But this motive, which would have amply satisfied another, stopped Blessed de la Salle. He feared to yield to nature, and to seek his own advantage while seeming to give it up. His sacrifice, in order to be agreeable to God, he would make absolutely disinterested and purified from all selfish feeling.

He, therefore, gave in his resignation after inscribing upon it the name of one of the humblest and holiest priests in the town, M. Faubert, who was far from dreaming of such an honor. The Archbishop was gone to Paris, and intrigues of all sorts began again to prevent his accepting this proposal of Blessed de la Salle.

Every one meddled in it : the Chapter, grieved at losing their brother-canon, desired to see him replaced by a man at least equally well-born ; his family considered it a crying injustice to rob them of the prebend which had been bestowed upon him, and an outrage on the young Abbé de la Salle to exclude him from the inheritance ; his friends could not understand his casting away from himself and his brother a position that was so universally coveted, and they condemned as a piece of excentricity a sentiment that was completely at variance with the general opinion.

The Archbishop himself was shaken by all these worldly considerations ; the Chapter had written to him ; all sorts of persons were circumventing him. Without withdrawing the consent he had so distinctly given, he determined to make one more attempt to persuade Blessed de la Salle to relinquish his purpose. He charged M. Callou, Vicar general and Superior of the seminary at Rheims, with this delicate mission. The negociator used all his tact and exhausted his eloquence, and then confessed himself not only conquered but converted. Blessed de la Salle's arguments were irresistible, and M. Callou's parting words to him were :— “ God forbid that I should advise you to do what so many are trying to induce you to do ! Follow where the spirit of God is leading you. This counsel,

the very opposite of the one that I came charged to deliver, is the true one. It is the only one you must listen to."

Thankful for this unexpected assent, Blessed de la Salle hastened to communicate it to the Archbishop, who felt he could no longer hesitate; he at once sent to M. Faubert the required provision. The latter took possession of his canonry on the 16th of August 1683, and the future showed that in refusing to resign in favour of his brother, M. de la Salle had obeyed a wise inspiration. Some years later, the Archbishop presented a vacant prebend to Abbé Louis de la Salle, "in order," he said, "to make up to him for his brother's folly."

The Abbé Louis de la Salle afterwards espoused the cause of the Jansenists, and was amongst those of the clergy of Rheims who resisted the Bull. If Blessed de la Salle had placed him in the Chapter, how bitterly he would have reproached himself for having listened to the voice of nature, and thereby put weapons into the hands of his own brother to divide the Church. It is true, Canon Faubert did not quite justify the hopes that were built upon his virtue. He deteriorated under prosperity. So long as he was poor, he was full of fervor. While Blessed de la Salle was near him, he followed his example. He came to live in his house, and founded there, side by side with the seminary for school-masters, a seminary for young ecclesiastics whom he directed with great piety and prudence. But when Blessed de la Salle left Rheims, the establishment fell away with the decay of the zeal that had supported it. No one, of course, could foresee this result. It is in no man's power to penetrate the future dispositions of others, or to fix them in the right way. All that can be done is to act according to one's light, with a pure intention, free from personal interest and natural sympathy, and this is what the holy priest had done.

After separating from his family and leaving the Chapter, Blessed de la Salle thought of leaving the town, and going to Paris. M. Philbert advised him to do this in order that during his absence the angry excitement he had aroused might die out. M. de la Barmondière was impatient for him to arrive in Paris and endow his parish with a most useful establishment. Father Barré was also urging him to come, and assuring him that it is in Paris alone that his Institute could be solidly founded, so as to branch out thence over the kingdom.

Blessed de la Salle was sorely perplexed. He consulted his director, who took a different view of the question from that held by all these venerable persons whom we have mentioned. He said the Institute was as yet too young to be transferred without danger from one place to another, and that the establishment which M. de la Salle would leave behind him at Rheims would quickly fall away when deprived of fostering care. In Paris, he would have to go to great expense, and to overcome obstacles which seemed vague in the distance, but were certain to arise. It was better to wait. The promise he had given the parish-priest of Saint Sulpice was only binding on the condition of being useful and reasonable. If it was to be hurtful, he had much better adjourn its fulfilment.

These were wise reasons, and Blessed de la Salle succumbed to them. He wrote to M. de la Barmondière and to Father Barré, explaining the motives of his decision. He then set to work more earnestly than ever at his own sanctification.

M. de la Salle, in relinquishing his canonry, had given up honors, but he still remained rich. His fortune, a considerable one at that period, amounted to forty thousand francs. He was therefore in a very different position from the masters whom he was bearing after him into a career of evangelical perfection; consequently the objections of the latter still held good.

He was resolved to remove this difference, and no longer to continue in the enjoyment of opulence while he was counselling them to embrace poverty; he had begun his breach with the world by separating from his family and giving up his title, he now determined to consummate the sacrifice by giving up his fortune.

He began, as usual, by consulting his confessor. The latter, accustomed as he now was to the extraordinary virtue of his penitent, was surprised into admiration of this heroic renunciation, and, without actually opposing his design, he again advised him to wait. Blessed de la Salle obeyed unhesitatingly. "I will not give it up if you don't wish it," he said; "I will only give up as much as you wish, and if you desire me to keep anything, were it only five pence, I will keep them." A year went by in this way. M. de la Salle's obedience was an admirable proof of the purity of his intentions. His director recognized it, and gave him leave to do what he liked with his patrimony.

Blessed de la Salle had now to struggle with a violent temptation.

Since he was bent on giving his fortune to the poor, people said :— Why not give it to those school-masters whose vocation was imperilled by their poverty? Why not devote it to founding Christian schools? Nothing could be more legitimate, and the merit of his sacrifice would not be lessened, since he would be none the richer for it. This was the advice given him by many persons who passed for being wise, and who re-enforced it by quoting the example of M. Roland. But an interior voice was whispering to Blessed de la Salle that it was better to cast away all human elements in founding his work and to build only on evangelical poverty. Father Barré was of this opinion. He was against all endowments. He feared that security might dry up the source of grace, and that his Religious, feeling themselves provided for, might be less perfectly submissive to the orders of Providence and of their Superiors. He wanted that the spirit of his own Institute should draw its strength from absolute disinterestedness, from the love of poverty, from the pure desire to labor for the salvation of souls in perfect abandonment to Divine Providence. The moment the community was securely provided for, girls with no vocation would be wanting to enter, simply to get a living. They would dissemble their purpose, make a show of zeal, and there would be no discerning the true vocations from the false. “ It is better,” said this holy man, “ that the schools should only last twelve or fifteen years without funds, and preserve their fervor, than that they should last longer and fall away and become relaxed.” And he repeated incessantly to the Sisters : “ If you endow, you will sink ¹. ”

Father Barré stood faithful to these maxims to the last. He had given in at Rouen, not to hurt the feelings of the founders of his schools; but he held his own in Paris, and refused money that was offered him to found a house and obtain Letters Patent that would have secured it against want. He would have the Sisters lodged in a house that was lent to them on precarious terms, and he was constantly setting this foundation against Rouen, and declaring that the latter was accursed because it was endowed. “ We have *muris* and *ante-murale*, ” he used to say; “ Rouen is the *ante-murale*— outside the holy city; Paris must be the *muris* which represents the purity of the apostolic spirit. ” What Father Barré had practised

¹ Si vous fondez, vous fondrez.

so faithfully in his own Institute, he advised Blessed de la Salle to do, and the latter was quite willing to follow the advice. He probably imbibed in the society of the holy friar much of that love of poverty, that detachment from the things of this world, and that perfect abandonment to the will of God of which he was to give such numerous and marvellous examples. For heroic souls like M. de la Salle, the difficulty lies, not in doing their duty, but in knowing it. He did not wish to *décide* too quickly, for he knew that there is a variety of ways of going to God, and that every Institute has its own rule and its own ideal.

He had recourse to prayer, his usual resource, and addressed the following humble petition to God :— “ My God, I do not know whether to endow, or not to endow. It is not for me to found communities, nor to know how to establish them. It is for Thee, my God, to know, and to do it in the way that pleases Thee. If Thou endowest them, they will be well endowed; if Thou dost not endow them, they will be without endowment. I pray Thee, O my God, to make known Thy will to me. ”

He decided finally to give all his goods to the poor, and no sooner had he made this resolution, than the occasion presented itself for putting it into execution.

The year 1684 brought a famine which devastated the whole of Champagne, and the town of Rheims was especially stricken. Blessed de la Salle sold all he possessed, and fed the hungry. He proceeded in this crisis with the order that he carried into all he did, and distributed his alms with great discretion and prudence. He divided his patrimony into three parts. The first was for the children; all those who came to the schools received a piece of bread which sufficed, not only for them, but for their families. The second was for the shy poor who were too proud or too timid to leave their homes, and who preferred to suffer rather than beg; Blessed de la Salle visited them himself, and carried them his gifts, doing all in his power to sweeten the offering to them. The third part was given away in the house. Every morning, the poor assembled there, and Blessed de la Salle, or one of the priests who lived with him, addressed a few familiar words to the crowds, and when their souls had been thus nourished, their bodies were fed. Blessed de la Salle generally spoke after his mass. His piety was so ardent, and his charity so tender, that he saw in every beggar Jesus Christ clothed in rags,

hungry and cold. He would prostrate himself, and then on bended knees offer bread to those poor creatures with the same respect and joy that he would have had in giving alms to Jesus Christ. He considered it an honor to be one of the poor himself, and to receive his pittance with the rest, as an alms.

This distribution began in 1685 and lasted about two years. When it was over, Blessed de la Salle, stripped of everything, and become himself poor with Jesus Christ, resolved to taste poverty in its bitterest extremities. Having occasion to go to Rethel in order to confer with the Duc de Mazarin about establishing a seminary for village school-masters, he travelled on foot, and begged his food all along the road. He had great difficulty in getting a piece of black bread from an old woman, and he ate it with delight. This was truly the workman God was waiting for. Blessed de la Salle was now three and thirty years of age.





Night watches of Blessed de la Salle in the church of Saint Remi, at Rheims.

CHAPTER IV.

FOUNDATION.

It was now four years since M. de la Salle had conceived the idea of renouncing everything in order to give himself exclusively to the Christian schools; it took him from 1682 to 1686 to divest himself wholly of the goods of this world. During that time, his Institute had been gradually emerging from the clouds of his first conception, and it really seemed as if in proportion as Blessed de la Salle advanced in perfection, the Community formed itself on his model and assumed a definite shape. The soul of a founder is as it were the mould of his Institute.

Blessed de la Salle's first care had been to bring his flesh under subjection, in order to fit himself for the mission he had undertaken, and to draw down the Divine blessing upon it. He wore a hair-shirt whose sting exercised his patience, and banished that soft ease which is so often the germ of sin. He wore, besides this, a leathern belt with iron points turned against the flesh. Frequent flagellations with a discipline of iron points still further helped to bring down that rebellious body, which is inevitably our master, if we do not compel it to be our slave. Blessed de la Salle came forth from his chamber, with lacerated flesh, but with a heart joyous, free, ever ready for work and sacrifice.

Born in opulence, he had been brought up with great care, and

his health was delicate. His stomach recoiled from coarse food, and had always to be humoured a little. But the holy priest was not going to put up with this, and to be tyrannized by an organ that is made to obey; he resolved to get the better of it, so he sat down to the common table, and was served like the others. At first, nature rebelled; his throat seemed to close against the food. The struggle lasted several days at the cost of painful suffering. Neither the flesh nor the spirit would yield. Blessed de la Salle then condemned himself to a rigorous fast which brought him to long for food with an intense craving. Hunger was the goad that conquered nature, and his stomach accepted whatever food was offered it. The conquest was so complete that the holy man no longer even noticed what he ate. One day, the cook, by mistake, served up a dish of wormwood. On tasting its bitterness, the Brothers thought that they were poisoned, and would eat no more. M. de la Salle alone went on quietly finishing his portion; he perceived nothing.

The Saints do nothing without prayer, and thus it is that they arrive at founding works that endure. The soul that places itself in the presence of God before beginning an undertaking, grasps all its bearings more firmly. Seeing things from a greater height, it embraces a wider scope, and rises above personal considerations that often dim the vision. It sees clearly whether it is animated in its endeavours by human sentiments, changeful as the interest that prompts them, or by one of those higher motives whose dominion time only confirms. In a word, man feels that he is leaning on God, and then his confidence is strengthened. First, boldness comes to him, then energy, then patience. We do not do the thousandth part of the work we might do. What we want is first the courage to dare, and then to persevere. With these two virtues, we might do all things.

Moreover, prayer, like a magnet, draws down the blessing of God. Events arrange themselves according to the will of those who pray; hearts open and grow sympathetic, and workmen hurry from the four points of the compass without any one calling them. Those who have followed the growth of Christian foundations have infallibly remarked the extraordinary coincidences that have pressed into their service elements the most unlikely. One seems to feel that an unseen hand is putting in motion a variety of forces that we

could not control, and we discover unknown allies who, against all hope, bring about the success of the boldest, the rashest, the most vast conceptions.

This blessing does not chain down our liberty; it does not dispense us from efforts, nor destroy the obstacles that spring up on our path; on the contrary, sometimes it seems to create them. As the laborer sows the seed, and then waits until winter has passed and harvest time shall come round, so do the Saints sow in fields that remain a long time barren. They work without making any progress; but their merit is not lost; the angels gather it, and put it safely away in the eternal granaries.

Blessed de la Salle found in constant prayer the secret of those incessant victories which he gained over himself. He prayed by day, he prayed by night, and his life was one long communion with God. Jealous of sleep that interrupted it, he cut short his rest as much as possible. He slept on the ground or on a chair, and interrupted these comfortless slumbers by prolonged prayers; yet the early bell always found him up and dressed, and with a countenance that betrayed no signs of the penances of the night. At Rheims, he had himself locked into the church of Saint Remi every Friday evening, and spent the night watching in prayer on the tomb of the Saint. The mission that he had undertaken was not perhaps without some resemblance to that of the holy Bishop. He too was called to teach the doctrine of Christ to barbarians, to that rude and ignorant people that the Revolution was one day to crown King, but who was not faithful, like Clovis, to the lessons of the Church.

This life of prayer was never interrupted. Blessed de la Salle never deviated from the rule which bade him seek in God the light and strength that he needed. The roots of his soul were, so to speak, steeped in prayer, and his external actions were but the visible fruits of a hidden life.

The fire which consumed the holy founder communicated itself to his disciples. Several young men of the town came to him. Some forsook manual labor for the harder work of education; others came from the colleges, and renounced profane studies to apply themselves under his direction to the higher science of salvation. All strove to emulate him in austerity and virtues. The house they occupied, being now too small for his flock, that was increasing

daily, he hired another in Rue Neuve, and this one may be considered the cradle of the Institute. The public christened it little La Trappe. The Brothers practised, in truth, all the rigors of M. de Rancé's Rule, but in the midst of a town, with all the noise and din of external life around them, and none of the ineffable consolations of solitude. It was here that Blessed de la Salle began to draw up the outline of his Rule.

He knew that no community can be real or fruitful without a Rule that unites all the different wills of its members, and makes the efforts of all converge to one end. The Rule passes for a slavery in the eyes of the world; but, in reality, it is an emancipation. It arranges for each one what he has to do, and liberates all from the bondage of deciding about those innumerable little actions of daily life which harass our freedom, or scatter its energies on a thousand unworthy trifles. Wise minds feel so strongly the advantage of such a method, that they adopt it even in the world, and make to themselves a rule to which they generally remain faithful.

But the prudent founder did not choose that the Rule should be his own work. He was too experienced and too humble. He would only draw up his Rule after long and careful reflexion, prayer still longer, and under the dictation, as it were, of the Holy Ghost. His disciples, whose conduct it was to govern, were also to have their share in the writing of it. They would be all the more docile to its prescriptions, if they had recognized its wisdom beforehand.

He therefore gathered twelve of them together, to discuss these important questions. They began their deliberations by a retreat, in order to draw down the Divine blessing and light on the resolutions they were about to adopt. This meeting is looked upon as the first general assembly that was held in the Institute. The retreat opened on the 10th of May, which happened to be the eve of the Ascension, in 1684. Blessed de la Salle made known the object of it: — "It was necessary," he said, "that the masters, hitherto bound together by frail ties, should now become a community endowed with a life of its own, and through every part of which the Christian sap should flow. Rules were necessary for this purpose; but, before being written, they should be observed. Habit would thus render the burden lighter, and experience would retrench whatever might be exaggerated in it. By this wise conduct, you will find nothing but what is already familiar to you in the

new rules; your heart will recognize its own work in the book that is going to be compiled, and its laws will appear mild to you because you will have been yourselves the law-makers. You have now reached the point to which I wanted to lead you. Having witnessed your fervor and your piety, I wish to take steps with you to fix your state, to confirm your dispositions, to cement your union, and to begin the edifice of which you are the first stones. ”

The retreat lasted till the feast of the Blessed Trinity. The masters then discussed the various points of the Rule they were about to adopt. Each one had a right to speak out freely, without restraint, and to express his own feelings and opinions. The wise founder, who presided over these deliberations, rectified any views that struck him as mistaken; but he never imposed his own will; he generally addressed himself to God to implore His goodness to enlighten the rebel minds and the darkened hearts.

And yet this assembly did not bring forth a Rule, properly so called. The hour had not struck for it. But it was necessary to come to an agreement on the majority of points that constitute life in common, on the question of clothing and food, on the name to be taken by each, on the distribution of the day, and on the character of the bond which was to bind each master to the work he had undertaken. In a word, it was not the Rule, but the materials for the Rule that were about to be prepared. They decided, consequently, to adjourn the drawing up of the statutes. The second point discussed was the kind of diet to be adopted. It was to be substantial but frugal. The Brothers were workmen employed in a hard task : they ought not to practice more abstinence than what the Church imposes on all; but they were also poor workmen, and should, therefore, banish from their table everything like superfluity. The body should have what was necessary; nothing more. Fowl and dainty dishes were forbidden. On fasting days, they were to content themselves with vegetables and herbs cooked without any flavoring. Fish was excluded as luxury, except of the kind which the poor themselves used. The quantity was measured with a view to restoring strength without heaviness to the body, or any loss of activity to the soul.

The question of costume was next discussed. A great many reasons necessitate a common costume in a religious community. The habit is a symbol; it should remind the wearer of the calling he

has embraced, and be to him a kind of epitome of the Rule to which he is subjected. In casting aside the raiment of this world, the Religious renounces all the frivolities it represents, and a thousand tiresome remembrances depart from the soul together with the costume that suggested them. In entering on a new life, one adopts a new costume.

The habit is, moreover, a rallying sign which enables the members of the same family to recognize one another without ever having met, and so come mutually to each other's aid. They proclaim thus to the world to what master they belong, and avoid mistakes. It is not that they seek after honors or respect; the livery of Christ is not wont to win these; but they do not wish to be treated as being of this world when they have ceased to belong to it. The habit is also a protection against sin; it raises a barrier between the world and the Religious. A certain sense of honor, which still lives in every soul, obliges him who wears the religious habit to respect it, and to shrink from dishonoring it. Temptation will generally stand aside from his path. The founders of orders are too humble to despise this support to the virtue of their disciples. Lastly, Religious are poor, and a uniform costume is an economy. It affords no opportunity for variety of stuff or diversity of fashion.

The habit should answer to the profession. The soldier has his armour, the Monk ought to have his; for both have a battle to fight. The soldier is exposed to bullets and sword-thrusts, and girds himself with steel. The Religious has to fight against the assaults of the flesh; he arms himself with the livery of poverty, humility and penance.

This habit appears odd, yet it has not the ridiculous character of many which are adopted by fashion, and which look out of date the moment that the caprice which chose them has discarded them. Religious costumes are more conformed to the law of æsthetics. They answer their purpose, which is to cover and to clothe. They are of plain tissue and sombre aspect. Their beauty does not depend on colour or material, and it seems, on the contrary, as if the coarseness of the stuff only lent greater amplex to their folds. Art loves to reproduce them, and it does so without the minute labor that is often required in making the best of worldly garments.

The very unchangeableness of the religious habit constitutes a

charm. Time goes by and years pass over and over without its growing old. Belonging to no period, it always remains young, and thus partakes of one of the attributes of eternity. The masters, therefore, reflected long over the costume they were to adopt. Hitherto, they had gone on wearing the clothes they had brought with them, merely adding the little collar; but the time seemed now to have come for them to distinguish themselves from seculars. They could not, however, decide upon anything, so they left the matter to the wisdom of their founder, who only settled the question some months later.

Winter had come, and the mayor advised him to give his disciples a capote, then generally worn in Champagne; it was a large cloak with hanging sleeves that was a protection against the wind, the rain and the cold. Blessed de la Salle thought this cloak both simple and commodious, and he adopted it. He had it made long in common black stuff, and it became the distinctive habit of his Religious. Under it, they wore the soutane, without a belt, fastened with iron hooks. Thick shoes with double soles, and a broad-brimmed hat completed their costume.

Once the habit was adopted, the holy priest would never give it up. He had even to withstand strong opposition on the point, and his resistance was the cause, later on, of a veritable persecution against his rising Institute. And yet he was right. The founder of an order should, before deciding a point, reflect well, and listen to advice; but when he has made up his mind, he should never let the question be mooted again, nor yield to every passing opinion. Man's mind is changeable, and he who would fain conciliate everybody would never decide anything. If Blessed de la Salle had consented to change once the form of garment he had chosen, a thousand other reasons, equally serious, would have followed, and new changes should have been adopted, until the costume would have been at the mercy of the caprice of fashion.

The habit chosen by Blessed de la Salle drew great ridicule on him. The world is always ready to laugh at anything new. When the Brothers appeared in the streets clothed in their long soutane of coarse stuff, their wide cloak, their broad-brimmed hat, and their heavy shoes, they were the butt for all kinds of jokes.

People ran out to stare at them as they passed, and jeered at them with the most unseemly remarks. They accepted these humiliations

for Jesus Christ's sake, and clung to their costume, which is now respected all over the world.

It was at this same period that the masters agreed to take the name of Brothers of the Christian Schools, which they still bear, and which is the most beautiful and most typical of names.

But the most difficult question of all that had to be settled was that of the vows. Should they make vows, and what vows, and for how long?

The new Brothers had seen their predecessors lose heart at the first obstacles, and leave the new-born community under pretext that no barrier withheld them. Made fearful by this example, and feeling themselves full of fervor, they desired to bind themselves for life, and make perpetual vows. They were resolved in the bottom of their heart. Since they had the pain of the sacrifice, they would have at least the merit of the promise. What would the engagement add to the life they were already leading? Poverty? They had tasted all the sweetness of it during the two years they had passed through. Chastity? The greater number of them had for many years been aspiring to the priesthood or the monastic state, and they had given up all idea of marriage. Obedience? They felt every day how light is the yoke of Christian authority to a soul that has cast off the burden of its own will. There was, therefore, nothing to prevent them from pronouncing with their lips the engagements they had long since made in their hearts, and whose extent they had fully measured.

Nevertheless, Blessed de la Salle did not yet allow them to take imprudent vows which might have lured their souls to perdition. He knew human nature too well not to dread its allurements. Although he was satisfied with his disciples, he pointed out to them the necessity of mistrusting their own strength, of proving their virtue, and of learning in time to distinguish between those desires which float on the surface of the soul, and those which rise from its depths. It would be more perfect in them to wait upon grace than to run before it, and to show themselves faithful in small things in order to merit the grace to be faithful in great duties. It was, consequently, decided that they should only take the vow of obedience and of stability in the Society for three years, but that this vow should be renewed every year.

The ceremony took place on the feast of Holy Trinity. Blessed de

la Salle himself drew up the form of the vow. He signed it; all the others copied it and pronounced it after him. Events showed how wise he had been in postponing the perpetual vows. Out of the twelve Brothers who pledged themselves, only eight presented themselves at the renovation of vows, a year later. They continued to renew the vow of three years, until 1694, when the vows took another form.

The twelve Brothers had fixed their own engagement. It was now necessary to determine the nature of the bond that should be imposed on the other members of the community, or those who, being younger and more liable to change, could not be bound for a period, or left altogether free. It was decided they should only be bound by the vow of obedience for one year; they could renew it every year until their vocation was confirmed.

M. de la Salle occupied with his disciples the house they had hired in Rue Neuve; M. Faubert, the Canon, who had succeeded him, asked leave to live with him. Following his example, he had founded a community of students whom he was preparing for the priesthood; but the presence in one house of young men who were following different careers was open to certain objections— so Blessed de la Salle preferred to give up the house altogether to M. Faubert, and go elsewhere. The number of Brothers went on increasing, however, and soon the new abode was too small; at the beginning of the year 1685, the holy founder was obliged to go back to his old house, which M. Faubert in turn gave up to him. Confidence in God— this was the sentiment that constantly guided Blessed de la Salle in all his foundations. “ Our Brothers, ” he repeated, “ only keep up so long as they are poor; they will lose the spirit of their vocation the moment they take to working to earn the commodities of life. ” He cultivated this virtue in himself, and he recommended it unceasingly to his disciples.

Not only did he distribute all his goods to the poor, but he chose henceforth to be fed, clothed and lodged like a poor priest; soutane, hat, shoes, he selected the worst and the shabbiest of everything. His soutane was always clean, but of the coarsest stuff, thread-bare, and covered with patches; so long as it could be made to hold together by mending, he would not have it changed, so that when he finally put it away, it was impossible to make any use of it. Two robbers stopped him once on the high way, and stripped him; but,

when they examined his clothes, they gave them back to him. They were ashamed to carry off such booty.

He possessed nothing but his breviary, the New Testament, an Imitation of Christ, his crucifix, and his rosary; and when some one upbraided him with this excessive poverty, he replied : — “ What do you mean? Is one not very rich with the holy Gospels to draw the treasures of eternal life from whenever one wishes? Was not this the whole wealth of the solitaries of the desert, and the mine from which they drew their treasury of virtues? ”

He always chose the smallest room in the house ; he often occupied the common dormitory, or else retired into some corner where only one person could fit. At Rheims, it was a narrow cell, a sort of dovecot, situated at the top of the house; at Saint-Yon, it was a half underground room, close to the stables, and pervaded with the smell of them.

His greatest desire was to die at the hospital, and in 1690, in a serious illness that attacked him, he implored the Brothers to carry him there.

He never ceased commending to his disciples this virtue of poverty, so loved of the Hermits of the desert and the Prophets. Without tolerating dirt or untidiness which spring from vanity or sloth, he severely blamed all complaint or self-seeking. A Brother having written to expose to him the poverty of the house, the lover of poverty made answer : — “ You are poor. Our Lord was poor, although He might have been rich. You must imitate this Divine model. It looks as if you expected to want for nothing. Who would not be poor on those terms? Even the rich would be content to put up with such poverty. Remember, I pray you, that you did not come into the community to have your ease, but to embrace the state of poverty with all its inconveniences. You are poor, you say; well then, you never had so many opportunities of practising virtue. ”

The vow which Blessed de la Salle found it hardest to practice was obedience. He was the superior. What chance was there that a priest, a Doctor of Divinity, should ever have to obey poor laymen so far beneath him both intellectually and socially? And yet, all his life he was tending to this. Soon after taking his vows, he thought of resigning his office of Superior; he pursued this purpose for years, and succeeded in accomplishing it before his death. In truth, his whole life had been a long act of obedience to the Rule as to all the

duties imposed upon him by the direction of the Institute. The Superior of a religious order may, while exercising command, practice this vow of obedience in all its perfection, for he has above him God and his Rule.

The pious founder had submitted with docility to that of the Brothers. A master being wanted in the school of Saint Jacques, M. de la Salle immediately took his place; he put on the soutane with the iron hooks and the mantle with the large sleeves, and went twice a day to the school and taught the class. He took the children to mass, and brought them back, and spent the day instructing them. This conduct, criticized in the Brothers, was considered altogether excentric and degrading in a Doctor of the Faculty, a Canon of the cathedral. His friends and relatives did not spare him. Mortified by his manner of life, they took sides with his adversaries, and set down his behaviour to pride and to madness.

M. Nyel had declined to enter the community of Blessed de la Salle. He had not the vocation, and his volatile nature would have been incapable of keeping steady to it. His mission was to come and go on every side, clearing the way, preparing minds, and laying the first stones of those schools that M. de la Salle was to build.

He was at Laon now, where he had founded a school, of which he had several times entreated Blessed de la Salle to take the management, but the latter had always refused. M. Nyel at last resolved to force him into consenting. He knew that if he went away, the holy man would take up his work and continue his functions; so he took himself off to Rouen, where the general hospital granted him, in consideration of his long services, the title of Superintendent of Poor Schools.

Blessed de la Salle found himself in a most embarrassing position. The parish-priest of Saint Pierre of Laon, who was a friend of his, hastened to Rheims, and made him understand that he could not let a flourishing school fall to pieces; if he did not come to the rescue, the masters would lose heart and the children would cease to be instructed. The servant of God could never resist such arguments as these. He went off at once and, moreover, he added to the direction of the Rheims schools those of the schools founded in the neighboring towns. He thus came to have a large congregation to manage.

These multifarious occupations in no way diminished his love of solitude and retirement. He seized every opportunity of flying from

the world, and being alone with God in whose presence he found the wisdom and strength he needed. He had reserved to himself, at the top of the house, a lowly little room that no one knew of, and there he used to hide himself, only leaving it when duty commanded him. But these imperious calls left him little leisure. Besides the cares of governing his community, he had countless visits to receive. The growing reputation of his holiness drew to him crowds of people who wanted his advice, and whom he could not refuse to receive. His Brethren of the Chapter were curious to see for themselves whether all they heard about his humility and his mortification was true. The Abbé of Saint Thierry, of the order of St Benedict, and many others, came with certain prejudices in their minds against the singularity of his mode of life; but all went away deeply edified by his conversation. He resisted these interruptions as far as possible, and wrestled, as it were, with God to remain with him in the silence of prayer and contemplation.

In 1686, he made a retreat in the solitude of Mount Carmel, near Louviers, some leagues from Rouen. He took his precautions not to be disturbed, and did not leave his address. He placed a Brother at the head of the house of Rheims with orders to provide for all that was needful, and in the event of any difficulty arising, to write to a Nun at Rouen who would forward any necessary letters.

But hardly had the holy man departed, than the two Brothers who were directing the school at Laon fell dangerously ill, and the Brother at Rheims only arrived in time to receive the last sigh of one of them. He wrote at once to Blessed de la Salle, who hastened his return within three days.

Painful as this event was to him, it did not disturb him, for he always submitted to the will of God uncomplainingly. Having nobody to put at the head of the Laon school, he broke it up, declared the holidays begun, and sent the children home for two months. Then, he set out at once for Rheims with the Brother who had sent for him. They travelled part of the night on foot without taking a moment's rest. A little before midnight, the holy priest consented to swallow a glass of wine and a crust of bread in a suburb about four leagues from Rheims; then, they started anew on their way. On arriving at Rheims, Blessed de la Salle sent the Brother to lie down, while he himself went to prepare for his mass by meditation. Prayer was his rest.

But all this while, death was making havoc in the little flock. From 1681 to 1688 seven Brothers died, all under thirty years of age. The most perfect, the ones who were ripe for heaven, were the first to go.

Brother John Francis, who had given up an important appointment to enter the community, lived about eighteen months, and died in 1684. He had been noted for his great piety, which did not forsake him during his last painful illness. Even in the ravings of delirium he gave utterance to the sentiments that filled his soul, and died in a sort of extasy, pronouncing joyfully the name of God.

Brother Bourlette went soon after him. He also was from Rheims, and of easy circumstances. His parents, whose idol he was, surrounded him with every sort of care, and it was this which made him turn away from the paternal house. He wanted a more bracing life and a more assured object. The hard trials that Blessed de la Salle had to undergo attracted him, and he knocked so persistently at the door that the holy man could no longer refuse to admit him. His parents were deeply afflicted by this determination of their son, and left nothing undone to shake it; but he stood faithful.

He was sent to Rethel, where he overworked himself, in spite of all that could be said to hold him back; nothing could restrain his ardor. His colleague having fallen ill, he insisted on keeping the two classes. "I have the right foot in one school-room," he said, "and the left in the other, my mind with our sick Brother and my heart in heaven." He was making haste to gather in his harvest of merits, as if he had a presentiment that the time would be short. Sickness took him, indeed, suddenly as it did his fellow-brother, and carried him off also in a few days. He died in 1686. The whole town mourned him.

The following year, the community lost Brother Maurice, also a man of singular piety. Two of the Brothers in the Community were stricken with the same disease, consumption. The doctor advised them to leave the community, giving them reason to hope that out of it they could be cured efficaciously. Brother Maurice refused to give up his vocation. He died on the 1st of May 1687, in his twenty-second year, full of resignation and fervor. The other Brother followed the advice of the doctor, but without avail, for he died three months later, and not without regret for having failed in perseverance.

Blessed de la Salle took the tenderest care of all his sick disciples, and neglected no means of prolonging their lives; but it is not in man's power to postpone the hour marked by Providence for our departure from this world. M. de la Salle, moreover, had no anxiety concerning the salvation of his disciples; he knew the purity of their souls, and he knew how worthy they were of the eternal reward. Their death alone would have reassured him. The parish-priest who gave them Extreme Unction said :—“ Never did I see any one, even at the age of eighty-four, die with such courage and resignation. ”

In 1683, the holy priest heard of another death, which, though it did not occur in the community, deprived it of a powerful protector and devoted friend. Father Barré, after a life spent in holy works, gave up his beautiful soul to God full of merits. We know the share he had in the foundation of the Christian schools, and the valuable advice he often gave to M. de la Salle. The latter did not forget this, as we shall see in the course of his future life.

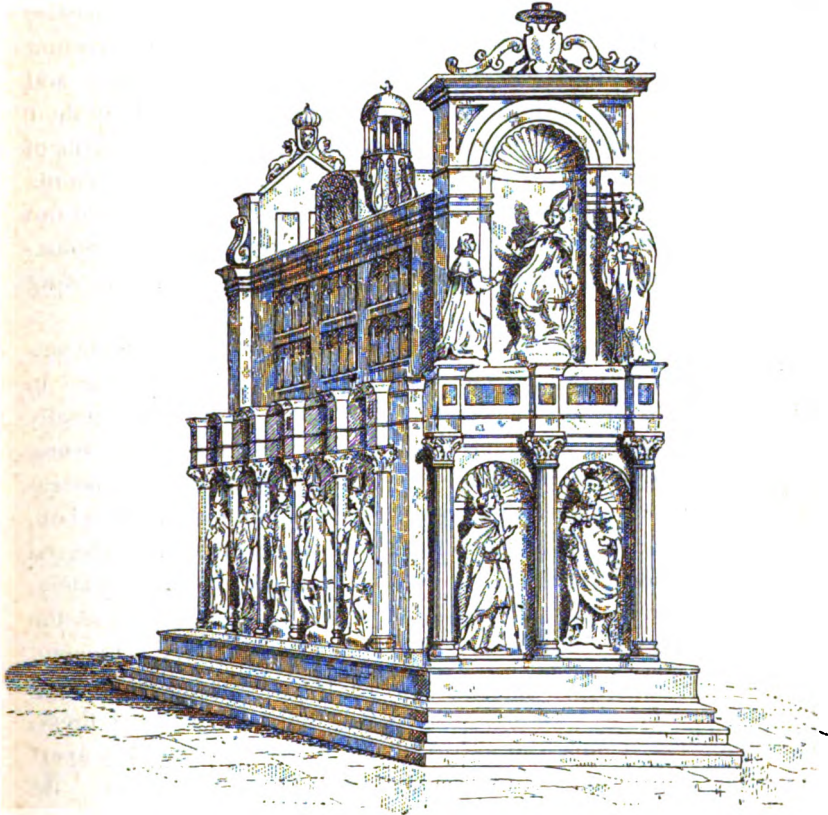
The spectacle of these frequent deaths so near him inspired Blessed de la Salle with the desire to prepare himself, and to keep his soul continually in the presence of God. He wished to resign the position he held amongst his disciples, and to confide the government to one of them, so as to be able to bury himself more completely in obscurity and obedience. His humility was so profound that it deceived him. He fancied he was not wanted, and that he could serve the Brothers better in praying for them than in governing them. He accordingly gathered them together, and laid his wishes before them with such forcible unction and wisdom, that he convinced them and made them believe it was essential to relieve him of the burden of authority. He had enough to do, he said, in confessing them and directing their souls, and the administration of the Institute disturbed him in this important duty; there were, moreover, amongst the Brothers many who were capable of filling his office, and since he must inevitably give them a successor, it had much better be during his life-time, when the new Superior might benefit by his experience and have recourse to his advice. Was it not, in fact, better that the Superior of the Brothers should be one of themselves, a man of their own condition, and distinguished from them only by his office?

These arguments prevailed with the Brothers, and, grieved as they were to be deprived of an authority whose wisdom they had learned

so fully to appreciate, they consented to their father's resignation, and proceeded at once to a new election. Brother Henri L'Heureux was chosen. He was the most competent. He was intelligent, pious, and if Blessed de la Salle had had the choice, it would have fallen upon him. But the poor Brother recoiled with terror from the new duties imposed upon him. He accepted them out of obedience; but it seemed to him that the house had been turned upside down when he found that he had to command him who was his Superior in every way, and whose voice he had ever obeyed with joy. M. de la Salle, however, by his humility and submission, made the task easy to him. He became instantly the most obedient of Brothers, and the most regular of novices. Assiduous at all the exercises, never dreaming of taking advantage of his former authority to obtain any dispensation, he seemed the last and the lowest of all. Morning and evening, he made the public accusation of defects. For the least omission, he went humbly on his knees, and confessed aloud what he considered he had done wrong, and begged for a penance. He would not have dared to receive a visitor, nor to open his lips before a stranger, without permission. Not only did he obey the Superior, but he looked upon every Brother who held any office as the depositary of authority, and carried out his least injunctions with punctual docility. The most repugnant task did not deter him; his humility anticipated them. He asked as a favor to sweep away the dirt of the house, and he was often to be seen peeling vegetables, like St Bonaventure, and washing up the dishes under the order of the Brother cook. Nothing could stop him from seeking these lowly offices, and Providence allowed it in order that his example might profit to his numerous family, and that in future all superiors, school-masters, Brothers and novices, should find a model in him.

The very excess of his humility betrayed him. It had been agreed that, in order to avoid public comment, the change in the community should not be mentioned. One day, some notabilities having come to see M. de la Salle, he said he could not speak to them without permission from his Superior, which he went at once to solicit. This surprised them so much that they could not conceal their amazement and disapproval. The incident was noised about the town and gave rise to a kind of scandal. People said it was not fitting for a Priest, a Doctor of Divinity, a former Canon, to be

under the orders of a simple school-master, that the natural order of things was reversed, and that the dignity of the ecclesiastical state was lowered by it. Everybody had something to say about it, until at last the news came to the palace of the Archbishop. The Vicars-general were of the opinion of everybody outside; they



Rheims. — Tomb of St Remi, by which Blessed de la Salle watched : its appearance as it was during his life-time. — Drawn by Édouard Garnier.

thought the position was abnormal, and went straight off to the little Community to replace M. de la Salle at the head of it, and Brother Henri L'Heureux under his orders.

The latter was delighted to be relieved of a function which had been a heavy burden to him, and the servant of God resumed it without murmuring, though not without regret. He began at once

to consider in what way he could continue to satisfy his love of obscurity. Meantime, he exercised command as faithfully as he had practised obedience. He was by turns the most submissive of disciples, the firmest of masters, always humble.

This humility had only too many opportunities of manifesting itself. The children were hard to manage and little used to discipline; it was necessary to train them, and consequently to chastise them. The Brothers, as yet inexperienced in the art of directing schools, yielded sometimes to a very pardonable impatience, and went rather too far. The parents, indignant, took the side of their children, and came to reproach Blessed de la Salle with the faults of his disciples which they exaggerated purposely. These complaints brought crowds daily to the doors of the house, and he could not show himself without being assailed with abusive epithets. Sometimes even, the mob followed him in the streets, hissing and hooting after him.

Despite of all these trials, the great work of Blessed de la Salle was spreading and perfecting itself. One day, a boy of fifteen asked to be admitted to the Brotherhood. The founder did not habitually receive such young candidates; he feared their not being strong enough to bear the rigors of the Rule, and to grant them dispensations would be a source of disorder in the Community. The boy, however, seemed animated with such good dispositions, that Blessed de la Salle made up his mind to receive him. Almost immediately, three other young fellows of the same age came knocking at the door, soliciting the same favor. The holy priest saw in this incident an indication of Providence. He questioned the lads, and having assured himself of their excellent dispositions, he received them, and conceived at once the idea of forming a little Community apart from the larger one, for which it should be a preparation. He established it in a house separated from the principal one, and only communicating with it by a door. Dormitories, refectory, classrooms, everything was distinct. The kitchen alone was in common, and from here the meals were carried to the two communities, who ate separately.

M. de la Salle placed the young aspirants under the guidance of an elderly and experienced Brother, and gave them a Rule which was a modification of the Statutes. Every day, they recited the little Office of the Blessed Virgin and the rosary. Twice a day,

they had the examination of conscience, spiritual reading and prayer; they went to Communion generally on Sundays.

The rest of their time went in completing their studies. They learnt to read, write and cypher. Their exercises were at fixed hours; in a word, they followed a rule of life very similar to that which is now used in novitiates.

Blessed de la Salle loved to come amongst these young students to relax from the strain and fatigue of heavier duties, and delighted in initiating their innocent souls into the secrets of perfection. He gave them as a model the Child Jesus, whose image he placed in their oratory. On Christmas day, he was the first to consecrate himself to the Divine Infant, and he did so with as much fervor and piety as if he had held him in his arms. The young novices followed. The life they led had transformed them. They had lost the giddiness and petulance of youth, and assumed an air of gravity and discretion which struck all beholders. They did not wear the habit. The collar and cropped hair were their only external signs of resemblance with the Brothers, and yet they had the air of professed Religious. Occasionally, Blessed de la Salle called one of them, whose vocation seemed to him certain, to teach in the schools with the Brothers.

This community flourished. It had begun with four members, and at the end of a few months it reckoned twelve. It had proved efficacious in training masters. It was a veritable novitiate. It held on at Rheims for two years after Blessed de la Salle's departure; but, deprived of his direction, it grew relaxed; the young men went off, one after another, and no new comers replaced them. The holy founder was obliged to bring to Paris the few who remained.

Towards the same period, that is to say in 1686, several village pastors from the neighborhood of Rheims, having heard of the Christian schools and their good results, entreated Blessed de la Salle to send them masters. The country schools were the most neglected of all. The perspective of the lowly and impoverished life that awaited them kept aloof such teachers as were really competent, and the school was handed over to the first comer. The pastors, urged by the Church to organize primary education in the parishes, did not know where to turn for school-masters.

M. de la Salle could not satisfy them; he had not masters enough;

besides this, he had made a rule of never exposing his disciples to the dangers of solitude; consequently, he always sent two together to every school; and these poor villages could not support two Brothers. The pastors, getting no help from that quarter, determined to find masters themselves, and send them to Blessed de la Salle to be educated. They recruited in their parishes young men full of good will and ready to devote themselves to this arduous career, and they sent them off to M. de la Salle, begging him to train them on the model of the masters at Rheims who were so useful and valuable.

The holy priest welcomed the newcomers, and did not shrink from the extra burden of labor and expense they entailed, for they brought nothing themselves, and the pastors were too poor to contribute anything, so the whole weight fell upon M. de la Salle. He settled them in a separate wing of the building, and formed them into a new community which soon numbered five and twenty members, and was placed under the care of an experienced Brother. A perfect spirit of union reigned amongst these young men, who had their exercises and regulations quite apart. They were formed to piety, but not bound to the rigors of religious life, for they were laymen, and were to remain laymen. They kept their secular dress, having merely, like the novices, the turned-down collar, and close cut hair. They learned reading and writing, and, as they would be expected to chant at the parish services, they were taught plain-chant. When they were sufficiently well instructed, they went back to their village, and taught in the school. They were subjects of edification for the whole parish, precious auxiliaries for the pastors, and devoted masters for the children to whom they taught the rudiments of knowledge and the practice of Christian life.

This Community, which was called the Seminary of school-masters for the country, was the first model of the Normal Schools. The genius of Blessed de la Salle had anticipated the civil law of France by more than a century. He had embraced with one glance the whole system of primary education, and had established both religious and lay teachers at the same time, reserving the former for the towns, where they lived in community and could excite one another to the perfection of their calling, and sending the others into the country. For these latter, life in community was not

necessary, for their profession was less arduous, and it was enough for them to have passed a certain time with the Brothers, and been disciplined by their Rule, and formed to holiness by their example.

It was not chance that led Blessed de la Salle to found successively these various establishments that were needed for children. It is true, he let himself be led by circumstances which to him indicated the will of God; but, once his mind was made up, he kept to his plan with unwearied perseverance. The Seminary of school-masters for the country, which he founded at Rheims, flourished so long as he remained there, but it could not survive his departure, and died out.

Blessed de la Salle had, therefore, at Rheims three communities which formed together a sort of complete University for primary education : these were the Community of the Brothers, that of the Novices, and that of the school-masters. They comprised about fifty persons that he had to govern, to instruct and to support. Now M. de la Salle had no means whatever. He began this foundation by giving his patrimony to the poor, reserving nothing either for himself or his disciples. And yet so long as he was at Rheims, they wanted for nothing. The blessing of God was upon him.





M. de a Chetardie visits the school of Blessed de la Salle.

CHAPTER V.

THE SULPICIAN SCHOOLS.

AND now, the Institute of the Brothers is founded. All the establishments in which Blessed de la Salle is to interest himself later on, exist at Rheims— at least in the bud. The principal points of the Rule are fixed and put on trial. The work must now be transferred to a wider sphere, just as a plant, whose vigorous growth can no longer be compressed within the earthen vase where it first sprouted up, must be transplanted into the ground where it will have room to put forth its roots and extend its branches unimpeded. At Rheims, the Community of the Brothers must have remained a diocesan institution, and would have yielded but scant fruit, whereas it was destined to reform the Christian education of the children of the people all over the world.

Neither could it have been thoroughly tried at Rheims. The virtue of Blessed de la Salle had found it easy to bring over the little local hostilities with which Providence surrounded the rising work, like those little thorns by means of which an intelligent laborer protects a delicate flower when it begins to blossom.

In order that neither pride, nor vanity, nor self-indulgence should tarnish or corrupt the generous desire which had prompted him to devote himself to children, he had had to bear with the opposition of his family, the contempt of his Brethren, the rebuffs of his superiors, the jeers and outrages of the crowd. But his patience, his charity and his piety soon disarmed his adversaries.

He was destined to undergo other trials.

The soul of the Saints must be beaten down by contradiction, by envy, by the hatred of men; they must be purified in the fire of suffering. They are made strong by those very blows which break to pieces less courageous wills. Iron is tempered where glass is shattered. Straw is burnt up by the fire from which gold comes forth purer and more brilliant.

It was well, moreover, that Blessed de la Salle should be withdrawn from that centre to which his life was attached by so many human links—his family, his friends, the memories of his childhood. These were means that Providence had no need of, leading-strings which became hindrances, and, after having assisted his first steps, prevented him from taking his flight unimpeded. He must needs be cast forth alone, unknown in a strange world, carrying his work with him, and having only God to lean on.

Paris was the place destined to be his abode during this new phase of his existence. There, alone, he could be quite lost in the crowd, and given up to his enemies, without being able to turn to his past for protection. From this centre only could his Institute, if it stood out against all contradiction, branch forth all over the world.

Blessed de la Salle had long been anxious to settle in Paris.

Father Barré had frequently advised him to do so, and he had himself promised M. de la Barmondière, parish-priest of Saint Sulpice, to come and found a school in his parish.

But he was the servant of Providence before everything else, and never sought to anticipate God's hour. He would not leave Rheims without being authorized by his superiors to do so, nor would he go to Paris without being called thither. M^{sr} Letellier, on hearing of his intention, first endeavoured to hold him back; we cling most to the treasure we are about to lose. The Archbishop saw the advantage that M. de la Salle would be to the diocese, if he could persuade him to settle down there, and to this end he made him the

most seductive offers. He promised to defray all the expenses of the community, and to give him the means of extending it throughout the diocese. He named only one condition: the holy man was not to found any schools beyond it.

Blessed de la Salle would not accept these terms. He had distributed his fortune to the poor, and had kept nothing for himself; he was not to be tempted by other people's money. His sole ambition was to establish his Institute solidly, and to ensure its development. He laid his reasons before the Archbishop, and the latter appreciated them. He was not a man to put his own interests above those of the whole Church, and he left Blessed de la Salle free to follow his inspirations.

At this period, the parish-priest of Saint Sulpice, remembering the promise which had been made to him, begged Blessed de la Salle to come to Paris and fulfil it. The parish of Saint Sulpice was, in truth, ready to receive him.

The faubourg Saint-Germain had long been one of the most ill-famed quarters of Paris. It was not that it lacked religious establishments; it was filled with them. The parish of Saint Sulpice, more extensive but less populous than it is now, was bounded, on the east, by the Rue des Fossés-Monsieur-le-Prince and the Rue Dauphine; on the west, by the wide stretch of waste ground that separated the Rue du Bac from the Invalides; at the north end flowed the Seine, and at the south ran the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, beyond which there were no more habitations. In this district, which was really as vast as a town, there was plenty of room for the Abbey of Saint Germain-des-Prés, with its courts and buildings clustering round the church; for the Carmelite monastery, whose gardens faced the Luxembourg; for the Jesuits, whose principal novitiate stood where the Rue Madame now begins; for the Seminary of Foreign Missions, and a score of other convents belonging to a score of different orders.

In and about the deserted streets and waste ground that lay between these enclosures, the thieves and vagabonds held high court and eluded all supervision. So that side by side with the pious population within monastic walls there was another population that bore no resemblance to it, and was infected with every vice.

The pastor of Saint Sulpice who immediately preceded M. Olier,

despairing of the parish, wanted to send in his resignation in 1641.

St Vincent de Paul, struck by this state of things, came and preached a mission there, the only one he preached in Paris. The result was quite extraordinary. It was in 1642. An immense number of his hearers were converted on the spot. The most hardened sinners, at the sound of his voice, publicly struck their breast, and rushed sobbing to the confessionals, to obtain pardon of their sins. The word of God sown by such an apostle could not prove barren.

The following year, M. Olier, his friend and disciple, accepted the presbytery, and moved it close to the church of Saint Sulpice with the community of priests that he had formed at Vaugirard, and he poured out upon that abandoned population the treasures of his inexhaustible charity and the marvellous graces that followed on his steps. The parish came from his hands regenerated. After some years, it had gained, by the piety of its inhabitants and the multitude of its good works, that reputation which still distinguishes it above all other parishes in Paris.

In 1652, the year after the birth of Blessed de la Salle, M. Olier retired to the Seminary to devote to its direction all the strength that remained to him. He wished, before dying, to insure not alone the regeneration of one parish, but of all France, by forming a nursery of priests who would carry their zeal into every land, and found in their turn other nurseries of evangelical workmen.

In giving up his presbytery, M. Olier had not given up his parish. From the Seminary, he continued to watch with fatherly eyes the growth of his works, and he was still the model and the inspirer of his successors. After him, M. Bretonvilliers, M. Poussé, M. de la Barmondière, kept his traditions, which thus had time to take root, and are still living and observed.

The parish was administered by the Pastor of Saint Sulpice with the assistance of the priests of the Community and the Directors of the Seminary, who formed but one and the same Society. The priests of the Community fulfilled the functions of Vicars, and each of them was charged with some special work. Attached to the parish-priest was a Council of Vestry men who met regularly and managed the temporal concerns of the parish. Finally, M. Olier had organized charity meetings, some composed of men, some of

women, that helped him to direct, support and propagate his good works.

These works were innumerable. Fifty years after the death of M. Olier, on that soil which had seemed dried up by vice, and which religion had so magnificently fertilized, there existed, without counting the great monastic establishments that we have already mentioned, a score of communities of various kinds, teaching and charitable; more than thirty confraternities of artisans; congregations of gentlemen; asylums for orphans, for servants out of place, for young women who wanted to mend their evil courses; houses of retreat for persons in the world; in a word, all the inventions of a charity overflowing with zeal and most ingenious in its means and devices.

Up to 1669, the Abbot of Saint Germain had under his jurisdiction all the primary schools of the faubourg. The masters were obliged to instruct gratis all the poor who presented a ticket from the office. The faubourg Saint-Germain had been thus divided into seventeen districts, and in each of these there was a master and a mistress, which represented thirty-four schools. All the masters, with one exception, were laymen, and, generally speaking, the husband and the wife kept two schools, one for the boys and one for the girls. Besides these paying schools, there were charity schools. They had been founded by M. Olier himself, and were at first kept in the empty rooms of some buildings belonging to the Church.

There was a Rule for these schools. They were placed under the supervision of the Association of charity, which decided on the admission of the children. These latter were to be poor, at least seven years old, and domiciled in the parish. A member of the Association was named overseer of each district, and had the list of the children with their names, their age, the address and condition of their parents.

These volunteer inspectors visited the schools two or three times in the month; they had no fixed day for their visit, but came without being expected, the better to see for themselves how things went on. They enquired if the children were regular in their attendance, and they took note of those who were absent. If their irregularity had no plausible excuse, the overseers spoke to the parents; if it was persisted in, the children were dismissed.

The overseers also saw that the children were punctual to the appointed hour, and that there were no boys in the girls' school, and no girls in the boys' school. When a scholar was ill, they went to see him at his parents', and if these latter were too poor to take care of him, he was taken to the hospital.

The children stayed two years at school, and then they were struck off the list to make room for others. But the overseers continued to look after them, and if they were going to be put to a trade or in a situation where there was evident danger for their soul, the overseers tried to dissuade the parents, and sometimes, this failing, called in the authority of the parish-priest.

The children were first taught to read, and at the end of six or seven months they were expected to be ready to learn to write, and they were set to what was called the bastard Italian letters, which were the easiest. If the master did not know how to write, the child was sent to another school.

“ Instruction in piety and the knowledge of things necessary to salvation,” says the Rule, “ was the principal object in teaching the children. ” The parish-priest sent from time to time an ecclesiastic to give an instruction on the catechism, which the master made the children learn. Over and above this, the children were taken every Sunday and holiday to the public catechism which was taught in various parts of the parish. Reading began and ended with prayer, and the children were taken to mass every day by the master.

Such was the regulation that prevailed in the parish of Saint-Sulpice from the year 1652, and which, in order to be fruitful of much good, only needed good masters. But these were scarce. They generally lacked either capacity or good conduct. Some did not even know how to write; others, instead of taking the children to church themselves, charged some of the elder ones to take them there, and mass thus became an opportunity of misconduct to all. Then, masters were wanting. In 1652, the parish had been divided for the schools into seven districts, which supposes at least seven schools. In 1688, when Blessed de la Salle was called to Paris, there was only one, in the Rue Princesse, a large house standing half way down the street, looking to the east. There was a picture of St Anne over the door. This house was close to the one occupied by the priests of the community.

M. Claude Bottu de la Barmondière was then parish-priest of

Saint Sulpice. He was the third successor of M. Olier. Well informed, a Doctor of the Sorbonne, Director of the Seminary where he had been brought up, he was full of zeal for the parish, of which he had been named pastor in 1678 by the Abbot of Saint Germain. The charity-schools had been the object of his solicitude, and he had placed them under the care of M. Compagnon, a priest of the Community.

But M. Compagnon was breaking down under the burden. He had over two hundred children to manage, and his only assistant was a young man, quite inexperienced, who filled the functions of school-master. The pastor, wishing that the children should learn a trade while they were being taught reading, writing, and the catechism, had established a woollen manufactory in the house, and placed at the head of it a man named Rafrond who was to teach them the trade. In spite of the efforts of these three persons, the charity-school of the parish of Saint Sulpice was a centre of dissipation and disorder. M. Compagnon was overwhelmed with work, and he saw that all his efforts were fruitless. He suddenly bethought him of Blessed de la Salle, of whom he had heard the parish-priest speak, and he wrote to him in the month of June 1687, to ask him if he was a master who would second him in the management of the school.

The pious founder had long desired to establish his schools in Paris, and preferred the parish of Saint Sulpice to any other. He had had an opportunity of admiring the zeal of the clergy and the faith of the parishioners, and it reminded him of the happy days of his ecclesiastical studies. This offer was, therefore, very tempting, and he was inclined to accept it. But he withstood the temptation, not wishing, even under these circumstances, to deviate from his habitual prudence and the rules he had laid down for himself. He never sent out a Brother alone, and never took charge of a school unless invited to do so by the parish-priest. He replied to M. Compagnon that he was willing to give him two school-masters if the parish-priest approved of it.

M. Compagnon set off immediately for Rheims to arrange the matter, but Blessed de la Salle was absent, so he had to come back without seeing him.

On his return, Blessed de la Salle heard of M. Compagnon's visit, of his urgent entreaties that one of the Brothers would go back with him to Paris, and he was thrown into great perplexity. Ought he

not to yield? By being too rigid, was he not running the risk of losing an opportunity that he had long been waiting for, and that God now sent him? He prayed, he took counsel, and resolved to abide by his first decision.

He wrote to M. Compagnon, repeating what he had said in his first letter; he could not take charge of the school unless the parish-priest consented to employ two Brothers. M. Compagnon replied that he accepted these conditions.

The Abbé Louis de la Salle, brother of Blessed de la Salle, was going to Paris to enter the Seminary of Saint Sulpice. The holy founder desired him to call upon M. Compagnon, and tell him that he was ready to come to Paris, on the terms he had mentioned, and as soon as he should be sent for by the parish-priest.

Two months went by before M. Compagnon stirred in the affair. The needs of the school were growing more urgent, the burden heavier. M. Compagnon thought over the matter, and went off to Abbé Louis de la Salle to ask him the cause of his brother's delay. The Abbé replied that his brother was waiting for orders. M. Compagnon wrote to Rheims. Blessed de la Salle did not move; he wanted orders from the parish-priest; M. de la Barmondière must be consulted. The latter, being himself member of a community, loving his Rule, and practising obedience to his Superiors, exacted obedience from those under him. He was delighted with the sentiments of deference shown in Blessed de la Salle's manner of proceeding, and was confirmed in his good opinion of him. He immediately desired M. Baudrand, his assistant and future successor in the government of the parish, to write and tell him that he might come with his two masters, and that he and they would be heartily welcome. All difficulties were now removed.

Blessed de la Salle set out with the two Brothers, and arrived in Paris on the 24th of February 1688, eve of the feast of saint Mathias¹. After a few days' rest, the Brothers went to their task together with the young master who had been assisting M. Compagnon. They divided the school into three classes, according to their degree of instruction, and each master took one. Blessed de la Salle overlooked them all. He passed up and down the rows, exhorting the children to be steady, and instructing them in Christian doctrine. This

¹ Moved to the 25th, on account of leap year. •

first reform at once brought forth fruit. The children flocked in such numbers that the Brothers were overworked, and one of them fell ill. The servant of God at once took his place, and gave in Paris the same example of humility that he had given at Rheims. He kept the class, conducted the children to mass, and taught them reading and writing until the master was recovered.

Nevertheless, despite the zeal of the Brothers, the school was always in disorder. The Abbé Compagnon did not live there, and, moreover, he had none of the qualities that go to make a good manager. He was active, but fickle and quarrelsome. He was quite alive to these faults himself, and having had experience of M. de la Salle's capacity, he offered him the entire management of the school. But Blessed de la Salle modestly declined the offer, preferring to keep to his own function, which was that of supervising the classes. The Brothers, although they also suffered from the irregularity of the exercises, had orders to be silent and utter no word of complaint, shutting their eyes so as not to see, their ears so as not to hear, accepting gently what they could not avoid, and living in peace with all. Blessed de la Salle saw the evil, but he waited patiently for God to send the remedy.

In the month of April, M. de la Barmondière came to visit the school with M. Métais, a priest of the community. He was struck by the progress the children had made, but also by the disorder which still reigned in the house, and which rendered the school more hurtful than helpful to youth. M. de la Barmondière, with great sagacity, guessed that M. de la Salle, whose value he was able to judge of after a month's experience of his work, was the only one capable of getting the school into a good condition, and he begged him to take it in hand, M. Compagnon giving up all authority. M. de la Barmondière added that if two Brothers were not enough, M. de la Salle could send for others, the parish allowing a salary of two hundred and fifty francs for each.

Blessed de la Salle accepted this new work from obedience, but not without fear; for he foresaw it would be a source of trial to him, and that M. Compagnon's jealousy would put obstacles in his path. He was not, however, stayed by these apprehensions, but set to work courageously.

The Rule which had borne such good fruits at Rheims was at once applied in Paris. The Brothers lived as they had done hereto-

fore, making prayer and penance the foundation of their charity for the children. The latter were put under a severe discipline. The doors of the school were open at a stated hour, and closed as soon as class began. Those who were late had to stay in the street. Every day, the children were taken to mass. The day, by being properly divided, was roomy enough for all the exercises. Even manual labor was retained. Blessed de la Salle did not approve of it; he considered it a source of dissipation without any benefit; but the parish-priest had established it, so M. de la Salle would not suppress it.

These reforms produced marked results in a short time. The children grew more docile and industrious. They made rapid progress. Even in the streets their improved behaviour was noticeable, and the neighborhood, that had long suffered from their noise and quarelling, now admired their good manners. But everybody was not so satisfied with this improved state of things. The young master did not enjoy being restricted to a new manner of life, much more penitential than the one he had led before. The hosier, Rafrond, was also discontented; he still directed a manufactory in the house of the Rue Princesse, and he had to train the children of the school there to be workmen. The time allowed for manual labor had been cut short by Blessed de la Salle, and Rafrond, therefore, made less money, which did not suit him. But above all, the Abbé Compagnon could not forgive Blessed de la Salle the contrast between the present management of the school and the late one. He let himself be carried away by jealousy, and resolved to take advantage of the bad humour of his former auxiliaries in order to injure M. de la Salle in the opinion of the parish-priest; and the better to succeed in this, he resolved to destroy the manufactory.

He egged on Rafrond to complain; but Blessed de la Salle paid no attention to this. Rafrond, fancying himself necessary, walked off. The holy man let him go without a word. Knitting was the trade taught by the hosier. Rheims was famous for its knitting; M. de la Salle sent for a Brother who was well up in the work and could teach it to the children. The manufactory was quickly set up, and became more flourishing than ever.

The enemies of Blessed de la Salle felt their jealousy increasing with this increasing success, and redoubled their efforts to get him sent away. Tricks and manœuvres not having succeeded, they had recourse to calumny. One day, towards the month of July 1688, at

a charity meeting of ladies held at the parish-priest's, M. Compagnon so far forgot himself as to bring a most serious charge against Blessed de la Salle. We cannot say what it was. The Saints are quick to forget injuries, and those who have been guilty of them have no interest in remembering them. The accusation was, however, so cleverly got up, that it made an impression on several sensible persons, and the parish-priest himself believed it. He was a simple, straight forward man, easily deceived. Incapable of deceit himself, he never suspected others of deceiving. He let himself be prejudiced against the holy man, and showed this by the coldness of his manner, which, coming after his former kindness, was the more marked.

The servant of God suffered all in silence, humbly offering to God the injustice of which he was the victim. Evil reports spread quickly. From the month of July to September, the charges brought against Blessed de la Salle and cleverly worked up by their inventor became so overwhelming, that the parish-priest determined to send back the Brothers to Rheims. As, however, he did not wish to make a scandal, he sent word to M. de la Salle by his director, M. Baudrand, to go away of his own accord, and to take advantage of the holidays to do it quietly. M. de la Salle did not ask the cause of this unjust and unexpected dismissal. It was the ruin of all his hopes and his most cherished dreams; but he submitted without a murmur, and made ready to depart.

The Abbé Compagnon had triumphed. He saw himself once more at the head of the school, and already announced the news of the Brothers' impending departure. But the wicked ones are apt to blow their trumpets and cry victory too soon, for God interferences betimes in favor of those who leave the care of their honor in His keeping.

Blessed de la Salle had settled with M. Baudrand what day he was to present himself at the house of M. de la Barmondière and take leave of him. This interview weighed upon the parish-priest and woke up in his mind certain anxious doubts. The sight of the servant of God, whose countenance shone sweetness and holiness, shattered in a moment the whole edifice of lies that had been raised against him. The clouds of calumny fled before the brightness of virtue, and M. de la Barmondière said no more about Blessed de la Salle's departure. When the latter alluded to it, he replied: "We

will think about it." On leaving the room, M. Baudrand said to his penitent: "He will think about it for the next three years without changing anything. Live in peace, and keep quiet."

M. Compagnon redoubled his intrigues. Every day saw some new plan against the Brothers. The parish-priest and the community were called in as judges, until the parish rang with the accusations. Blessed de la Salle alone remained calm amidst all this noise and uproar, and attended to his school as if he heard and saw nothing.

At last, M. de la Barmondière resolved to get at the truth of the matter. He opened an enquiry, and charged the Abbé de Janson, afterwards Archbishop, to conduct it. The latter was a clever and prudent man, well suited to throw light on the affair. He took his time, visited the schools, got to the bottom of the various stories, questioned, kept watch, and discovered nothing in any quarter except proofs of Blessed de la Salle's patience and humility. His astonishment was so great, that he could not resist interrogating the holy man himself; he adjured him to break silence, and to tell him the whole truth concerning M. Compagnon. M. de la Salle tried to excuse himself, and said that, as he had not examined the matter, he had nothing to say. The only favor he asked for himself was that he might be informed of any faults that had been noticed in his behaviour, and given any advice that could help him to correct them.

This last trait of humility, being repeated to the parish-priest, entirely opened his eyes. He gave back all his esteem and friendship to Blessed de la Salle, and henceforth only sought how to assist him in the free and peaceable management of the schools. But he was very weary, and thought of giving up his presbytery. In the month of January 1689, he resigned in favor of M. Baudrand, and withdrew into a community of priests, where he lived in prayer until his death in 1694.

M. Baudrand was an old pupil of the seminary of Saint Sulpice, who, by his merit and virtues, rose gradually to the rank of director. He possessed M. de la Barmondière's whole confidence, and assisted him in the administration of the parish. He knew Blessed de la Salle better than any one, since he had been his spiritual director. He did not wish, however, to seem partial or overeager in this affair, and let several months go by without coming to a decision.

He was waiting for an opportunity. Towards Christmas that year, the priest who directed the acolytes of the parish died, and M. Baudrand appointed M. Compagnon to take his place, and withdrew him altogether from the schools, which he entrusted entirely to M. de la Salle. The latter, by his gentleness, had overcome every obstacle.

Once free, he applied all his zeal to the reformation of the schools, which soon became extraordinarily prosperous. The children, attracted by the good order of the classes, and the excellent teaching given them, became so numerous, that it was necessary to open a new school. This was the wish of the holy founder, who had spoken of it to M. de la Barmondière. M. Baudrand reverted to the project, and, at the beginning of 1690, the new school was opened in the Rue du Bac, near the Pont Royal, which was just finished. Blessed de la Salle was requested to send to Rheims for two more masters, and the parish-priest promised to contribute two hundred and fifty francs to their support.

The school in the Rue du Bac was soon as flourishing as the one in the Rue Princesse. But in the lives of the Saints trials succeed one another. They change their character, but the chain is never broken.

No sooner was he free from the persecutions of M. Compagnon than Blessed de la Salle had to contend with the school-masters, who brought an action against him; with the parish-priest, his protector, who abandoned him; with his own disciples, who rebelled against him.

The opening of the school in the Rue du Bac began to attract the attention of the school-masters. They lost a few pupils, who were drawn to the Brothers, either by their gratuitous instruction, or by their excellent method, and suddenly the whole pedagogical world took fright. Who were these new-comers, and why were they meddling with other people's business? Was it a reason because they chose to live like beggars and teach for nothing that they were to ruin the school-masters and send them to the hospital? What right had they to come to Paris? Had not the school-masters a privilege, granted by the precentor, recognized by Parliament, and which nobody had a right to touch?

These masters were poor fellows, eking out their living painfully, and therefore always on the watch against any attempt to cut

down their scanty earnings. The school fees were a mere pittance, and it was often hard to get that pittance paid. The mode of teaching that prevailed forbade their receiving many children together in a school. They knew nothing as yet of the system of simultaneous teaching, or mutual teaching, which were invented later by Blessed de la Salle. The children were taught one by one. The school-rooms were small, the scholars few, and the schools very close together. The distance that was to separate them was strictly regulated by law : " There were to be about ten houses between each school in the populous quarters, twenty in the others. " Many of the classes only reckoned ten scholars. Often, in order to increase the profits, the wife kept a school as well as the husband. She taught the girls in one room, while he taught the boys in another. But even when the income was doubled, it remained a pittance. The school-masters were, consequently, a poor little needy colony, jealous, looking askance on anything like competition, and ready to seize upon the rash mortal who ventured to trespass on their rights.

The masters seldom pleaded themselves— they had neither the time nor the money; but the corporation took their part and stood up for them. There was a syndic that held very much to justifying its function, elders who were the watchful guardians of the privileges of the corporation, a common purse that had to be spent on something. They began a law-suit, and carried it from court to court with the slow solemnity of the law and the imperturbable patience of the age. Sometimes the suit lasted half a century, sometimes a whole century.

The tribunal of the first proceedings was that of the precentor. He gave judgment in the first instance on the differences that arose amongst the school-masters, and the quarrels they had with the rivals who encroached on their privileges. His decisions could only be reversed by Parliament.

True, the Brothers kept charity-schools for the poor, and these latter, emancipated from the common law, were placed under the exclusive authority of the parish-priests. But children in easy circumstances came also, and if the Brothers did not refuse them, the paying schools would soon be abandoned. The school-masters, therefore, concerted together, and resolved to crush in the bud this work which they perceived dangerous to their own interests. The

result was a war against the Brothers of the Christian schools which lasted fifteen years.

There were intervals and truces; the Brothers were sometimes victorious, sometimes vanquished. The affair was carried before divers tribunals; but, finally, the school-masters won the day, for an act of the Parliament of Paris decided in their favor, in as much as it obliged Blessed de la Salle to remove the principal seat of his Institute to Rouen.

From the first, the battle raged hotly. The school-masters of the district of the Rue du Bac sent bailiffs to seize the furniture and shut up the classes. Then they summoned the Brothers before the precentor of Notre Dame, who was, as we have said, the first authority to be appealed to.

Blessed de la Salle had a horror of litigation. He practised to the letter that maxim of the Gospel: "If your enemy takes your cloak, give him also your gown." He did not defend himself. He considered his right too clear and strong to have any need of legal support.

He received at his schools the poorest children who were repulsed from everywhere else, and who could not pay the masters. Whom, therefore, was he wronging? The school-masters accused M. de la Salle of hiding under the name of charity-school a real school open to many children who might otherwise have come to them. The precentor, only hearing their statement, agreed with it, and condemned the Brothers.

Blessed de la Salle was grieved by this decree; his whole work was compromised. Even his director told him he ought in conscience to defend himself, or rather to defend the poor children whose cause he represented. Blessed de la Salle allowed himself to be persuaded. Convinced, however, that he could do nothing without the help of God, he began by making a pilgrimage with the Brothers to Notre Dame-des-Vertus, a place of devotion not far from Paris, and much frequented at that time. He said mass there, and the Brothers received Communion from his hand. The entire day was spent in prayer. They had all gone on foot, and come back in the same way, humble and penitent and tired, like real pilgrims who are in quest of a great grace. The Brothers had a piece of bread for their day's food; but Blessed de la Salle would touch nothing, preferring to fast the whole day, and only eat on his return at nightfall.

Thus prepared, he went confidently into court. He had no difficulty in proving that his school in the Rue du Bac was a charity school, opened at the urgent request of the parish-priest, that it did no harm whatever to the school-masters, and that there was no reason for suppressing it. These arguments prevailed; the sentence was reversed, and for some years the Brothers were left in peace.

But scarcely had this difficulty been settled when another started up. The costume of the Brothers, which had not yet been consecrated by long services and the gratitude of nations, appeared ugly and excentric. It had been criticized at Rheims; it was now criticized in Paris. They laughed at it in the streets. Society found fault with it. One wanted the cloak to be short, another disapproved of the shape of the hat.

The parish-priest of Saint Sulpice allowed himself to be prejudiced by these opinions. He disliked the costume. He would have preferred the Brothers to adopt the ecclesiastical habit and long cloak. Blessed de la Salle would not consent to this. He held essentially to the Brothers not being confounded with the clergy. M. Baudrand insisted, and could not understand why he met with so much resistance concerning a matter of such very small importance. But Blessed de la Salle could not yield. He had not decided this question of the costume without good reasons and grave deliberation. Every detail had been considered. The public were now growing used to it; the Brothers had become attached to it; changes would involve expense, and, above all, they would upset the stability of this part of the Rule. One parish-priest found one fault with the dress, his successor would find another. What pleased in this diocese would not please in the next, and if the founder gave way once, there was no reason why he should not do so again.

The habit of the Brothers would become the sport of caprice and fashion; even its uniformity would disappear, and it would be obliged to change according to the parish.

These considerations determined M. de la Salle to remain firm against all influences, and, to justify his resistance, he drew up a memoir which, he said, "had been approved of by many wise persons." The parish-priest of Saint Sulpice would not, however, give in; he said the servant of God was obstinate, and punished

him by diminishing the allowance he had made him for the schools. Blessed de la Salle was deeply grieved to find himself at variance with a man whose virtues he appreciated, and from whom he had received benefits; but he felt that he alone was the superior of the Brothers, and, therefore, being responsible, had received the necessary graces for guiding them.

Other trials were added to these, sharper trials, for they struck at the heart of the holy priest. He had brought with him from Rheims two Brothers carefully chosen, and who, in the beginning, answered all his expectations. They were earnest workers and patient under trial. But the number of scholars having increased, they no longer sufficed for the amount of work to be done, so M. de la Salle sent for two more Brothers. One of these was a man of eminent piety, and was placed at the head of the house. The first Brothers were vexed at this preference, and considered that the honor should have fallen to them by right, and that, as in the army, promotion depended on length of service. One of the Brothers could not bear the vexation, and went away. He was an excellent master, a good penman, and clever at imparting knowledge to youth, but pride spoiled these qualities. His departure was a loss to the school, a deplorable example for his colleagues, a wound in the heart of his father. The comrade of this Brother remained; but he had a violent temper, and gave way to it. He also left the house, and ended badly.

The successive trials that Blessed de la Salle had undergone, joined to his austerities and privations, seriously undermined his health. Towards the close of the year 1690, he had gone to Rheims, on foot as usual. On arriving there, his strength suddenly failed him, and he fell ill. He struggled against the malady for a time, but all his energy could not sustain the worn out body. He was compelled to take to his bed, and for a moment the Brothers feared they were going to lose him. Terrified at the prospect of this misfortune, which would have entailed the ruin of the whole community, they sent up fervent prayers to God for the recovery of their father. The medical men prescribed rest, care, and substantial diet to build up his strength. He might have had all this with his family, and especially in the house of his grand-mother, who still bore him the tenderest affection; but he refused to leave the community, and only accepted the relief and restoratives that

were compatible with the Rule. In sickness, as in health, he was to be a perfect model for the Brothers.

At the outset of his illness, he gave an admirable example of regularity. His grand-mother came to see him; but he refused to let her come to him in his room. He kept her waiting in the parlor while he had himself helped out of bed and dressed, and then, dragging himself down stairs as best he could, he met her with a cheerful countenance to prevent her seeing how ill he was. His grand-mother complained of this strictness, which, under the circumstances, she thought exaggerated. What harm could there be in letting her go to her son's room? Was it not a want of respect to refuse to admit her? Blessed de la Salle replied that he might certainly have with propriety received her visit, but that he thought it better not to do so. No Brother could now ever complain that his door was shut against his near relations when he heard that the founder, when seriously ill, had refused to receive his grand-mother. It is the duty of Superiors to set an example in everything, and even to go beyond the necessary, so that their children may not infringe its limitations.

At last, the illness was conquered, and M. de la Salle was convalescent. He wanted to set off immediately, and could not be kept back by the advice of the doctors. He thirsted to return to his austere life; but he was still very weak, and he had scarcely reached Paris when he had to take to his bed again, and, at the end of six weeks, a more serious illness than the first declared itself. The community was plunged in deep grief. Blessed de la Salle alone preserved his serenity undisturbed; he bore pain patiently, saw death approaching without fear, and was even free from all anxiety about his work, which, he knew, was in the hands of God.

The prayers of his children prevailed. He was attended by a very skilful doctor, the celebrated Helvetius, who prescribed one of those heroic remedies that either save the patient, or kill him. Before, however, administering it, he warned his patient of the danger he must run, and advised him to receive the last sacraments.

Blessed de la Salle prepared for death. He asked for the holy viaticum, and M. Baudrand brought it to him in solemn procession with several priests of the community and the seminary; a great number of pious persons joined the cortege.

Seeing the Brothers weeping round the bed of their beloved Superior, the parish-priest of Saint Sulpice addressed a few words to them full of affection and piety. He promised to be a father to them, and begged the servant of God to give them his blessing. The latter, who was seated on his bed, wearing the surplice and stole, stretched out his hand, which a Brother held up that he might give the blessing; but he was so feeble that he could only pronounce these words that contained all his last will: "I recommend to you great union and great obedience." He received Communion with fervent piety, and then placed himself resignedly in the hands of his doctor. The remedy had the desired effect. As soon as it was administered, a salutary crisis declared itself. Providence had desired to give Blessed de la Salle and those who loved him the merit of sacrifice without exacting from them the sacrifice itself. The servant of God was reserved for further labor and still greater trials.

Danger disappeared almost instantaneously, and strength returned quickly. The holy man was able to resume his austere life and his arduous work, without taking any heed of the warning he had just received. He had been compelled to cut short his stay at Rheims; he now went back there, leaving the Brothers under the charge of Brother L'Heureux, whom he designed for his successor. He was a pious, intelligent Brother, whom Blessed de la Salle was preparing to receive Holy Orders with a view to making him superior, and then withdrawing into retreat.

He had to this end made him follow the classes of the Canons regular at Rheims, where he won the esteem and admiration of his masters by the solidity and wisdom of his answers. Brother L'Heureux had returned to Paris, and was on the point of seeing his hopes realized: he was about to be ordained.

While Blessed de la Salle was at Rheims, he suddenly received a letter with the news that Brother L'Heureux had fallen ill; he had been seized with a fever. Next day, came a letter saying the patient was much worse. Blessed de la Salle hoped at first that the Brothers exaggerated the serious character of the malady; but a third letter brought tidings of the sick man being at the last extremity, and expecting death every moment. Blessed de la Salle, in dismay, set off at once, in hopes of seeing his dear son once more; but all his haste was unavailing. He learned, on arriving, that Brother L'Heureux had been two days in the grave.

This event was a great blow to the servant of God, and caused him one of the greatest sorrows of his life. When, on reaching the house, he learned that Brother L'Heureux was no more, his tears burst forth; but soon his courage rose to meet the trial, and he bowed to the will of God without a murmur.

He saw in this incident a warning from Providence that he was to modify all the plans he had made. Not only had he meant to put Brother L'Heureux in his place, but he had intended that in each house there should be a priest to say mass for the Brothers, and confess and direct them. In the presence of this death, he saw everything under a different aspect. He saw that the mixing of priests and Brothers might be a cause of division and jealousy in the Institute. The highest in dignity would impose their particular views on the others, and would dishearten them. All the Brothers would be aspiring to the honor of the priesthood, and would despise the humble work of the schools; they would get to prefer preaching and study to the ungrateful task of teaching, and the community would die out for want of subjects. All these reasons, which had before escaped his notice, now rose up in the mind of the founder. Not only he resolved never henceforth to receive a priest into the community, but he strictly forbade the Brothers to think of entering Holy Orders, and as if to remove from them the temptation of doing so, he prohibited the study of Latin; on this point he remained always inflexible. And he was right.



Blessed de la Salle making,
with twelve of his first disciples, the vow binding themselves for ever
to the work of Christian schools.

CHAPTER VI.

VAUGIRARD (1691-1697)

We have seen the trials that awaited Blessed de la Salle on his first arrival in Paris, where he was abandoned and mistrusted by those who had called him thither, and who ought to have befriended him to the end. But another painful trial was to follow on this one: he was destined to feel the pangs of want, and the dread that his community might die of starvation.

When he came away from Rheims, in 1687, he had left behind him three flourishing communities. The Brothers' House numbered six Brothers, without reckoning the two that he had brought with him; there were thirty masters in the Seminary for country school-masters; and, lastly, there were fifteen young men in the novitiate. But when the founder went away, the work began to perish. The Brother who succeeded him as director was harsh, and wanted tact. Owing to him, eight Brothers left the house in 1688, and for four years no new recruits replaced them. The country school-masters went into the villages and directed the schools; but, as Blessed de la Salle was no longer there to inspire confidence, no new subjects presented themselves, and this excellent institution was not carried

on. The novices themselves were not properly directed, and M. de la Salle was obliged to call them back to his own house. But in Paris he had not the same liberty as at Rheims. The parish-priest of Saint Sulpice and the sacristan insisted on the children spending all their morning in the church, serving masses. In this way they lost all regularity and steadiness. The novitiate lost its fervor, and soon died out. At last, Blessed de la Salle was obliged to send to Rheims for two new Brothers to keep the school in the Rue du Bac, so that there only now remained in the cradle of the community five or six Brothers, just the number they had had eight years before. Nothing could more clearly prove that Blessed de la Salle was the very soul of the Institute. Not only had he conceived the idea of it, but he was the workman who was indispensable to increase and uphold it. Owing to his presence and personal influence, the work had been founded in spite of all opposition, and had spread in spite of all hindrances; but the moment he went away, it began to languish, and if his absence were prolonged, it was in evident danger of perishing, notwithstanding the sympathy that surrounded it, and the help it might receive from outsiders. This bond which attached the Institute to his person was a constant source of preoccupation for Blessed de la Salle. It wounded his humility, and, as a founder, it alarmed him for the future. This fact explains many circumstances of his life. This is why he so frequently tried to find and train some one to be his successor. He gives in his resignation; he hides himself; he leaves the Brothers without news of him and without direction. They accuse him of forgetfulness and neglect; he only wants to accustom them to do without him, like the mother who, when guiding the first steps of her child, draws back, and leaves it by degrees to walk alone.

As yet, the moment had not arrived to make this experiment; this was made clear by what was going on at Rheims. In a few months, three flourishing branches fell, and the whole work seemed on the point of drying up at the root.

Blessed de la Salle was, therefore, obliged to provide for what was most urgent. He had to seek for fellow-laborers in his work, and to bind them to that work by the most solid engagements. In this way the work could be secured, and safe from any blows that death might deal it, for its destinies would no longer rest solely on one life.

The condition of the schools presented other matters for uneasiness. Many of the Brothers were overworked, ill, exhausted by toil and privations. Shut up from morning till night in dark, narrow school-rooms, tied to a hard and ungrateful task, poorly fed, badly lodged, their strength soon fell away. M. de la Salle, who watched over them with the tenderest solicitude, saw that it was absolutely necessary to secure them some retreat where they could recruit themselves. Moreover, several among them, when deprived of his vigilant superintendance, grew careless, and fell away from their primitive fervor. They relaxed the practice of their Rule and, being no longer sufficiently strengthened in their religious life, they could not withstand the enervating effect of the world around them. It was necessary for them to return from time to time to their spiritual father, in order to fan the flame of their vocation, to revive their inward strength, and stimulate their aspirations towards that ideal of perfection which he had conceived and realized so perfectly. With a view to these necessities, Blessed de la Salle hired a house at the entrance of the village of Vaugirard, a poor, isolated house, healthily situated, with a garden; and of this he made a kind of second cradle for the Institute. He remained there seven years, and, during that time, the Brothers of all the Houses came to spend their holidays there, and those of Paris their free days. The sick or overworked Brothers also came there to rest, and new-comers to reflect on their vocations and be trained for their new duties.

It was just at the approach of the holidays, in 1691, that this house was hired, and Blessed de la Salle took advantage of this circumstance to assemble all the Brothers of Rheims, Laon, Rethel, Guise and Paris. They all met on the 8th of October in that blessed house of Vaugirard. But, as he had not directed them for several years, he thought that a few days' retreat would hardly be enough for them, so he kept them till near the end of the year.

Having all his sons gathered about him, he began by making a retreat of ten days with them. Each one of them, forgetting the world, found himself alone with God, and meditated undisturbed on the life he had embraced, and the duties it imposed upon him. When the noise of the world does not deafen a soul, the voice of God makes itself heard. At the end of the retreat, the Brothers were renewed in spirit. Blessed de la Salle then put them through a strict practice of their Rule. He reformed abuses, corrected their

faults, and set himself to develop in each one of them the virtues proper to their state as Religious and teachers of childhood.

He chose amongst them all those who seemed to him the strongest and best fitted to become pillars of the Institute. He addressed himself to Nicolas Vuyart and Gabriel Drolin, and proposed to them that they should all three together make a vow binding themselves for ever to the work. They consented, and, having redoubled their prayers, they pronounced the following vow :—

“ Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, prostrate in profound respect before Thine infinite and adorable Majesty, we consecrate ourselves entirely to Thee, to procure with all our might and with all our efforts the establishment of Christian schools in the way that seems to us most agreeable to Thee, and most useful to the said Society. And to this effect, I, J.-B. de la Salle, priest; I, Nicolas Vuyart, and I, Gabriel Drolin, vow from this day forth and for ever, to the end of our lives, to procure and maintain the said establishment without leaving it, even though only we three should remain in the said Society, and should be compelled to beg alms, and to live on bread alone. In view of this, we promise unanimously, and with common consent, to do all that we believe in conscience, apart from all human consideration, to be the good of the said Society. Given on this 21st of November 1691, feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, in faith of which we sign.”

Out of the twelve apostles chosen by Jesus Christ, there was one traitor. Out of the two disciples chosen of Blessed de la Salle, one was to prove faithless. Brother Nicolas Vuyart let himself be tempted later on by the power that his master's confidence gave him. But God always strikes down the proud, above all in those holy societies that are more especially devoted to His service, and whose foundations should be humility and obedience. Brother Vuyart ended miserably. Brother Drolin, on the contrary, stood firm to the last in the way he had elected. He withstood alike adversity and prosperity, he bore patiently the most cruel want, and later on he rejected honors and fortune. Sent to Rome by his Superior, he remained there almost alone for eight and twenty years, faithful to his vows, observing his Rule, keeping school, and at last came back laden with virtues and with age to die at Auxonne, long after the death of the master he had so loved.

Reassured as to the future, Blessed de la Salle gave all his energies

to perfecting the Brothers, and worked at their sanctification unceasingly. They, on their side, seconded his efforts with the utmost good will, and by the end of the year they were so many new men, recollected, docile, patient, penitent and humble. M. de la Salle could, therefore, send them back to their posts with his mind at rest; but he was too prudent to leave them to themselves after such a trial. He exacted that they should write to him once a month to give an account of their interior dispositions. He answered them punctually, and his letters are models of firmness and gentleness, of elevation and fervent piety, and at the same time of practical knowledge of men and experience of life.

He visited the Brothers, moreover, once a month, in order to see for himself that no abuses crept in, and having had reason to rejoice in their sojourn at Vaugirard, he invited them all there for the holidays of the following year, and so long as he kept that house, they came every succeeding year to make a retreat of ten days, and follow the exercises of the novitiate for a month.

But it was not enough for Blessed de la Salle to keep safe the disciples that he had. It was necessary to fill up the gaps that occurred amongst them, and increase the number of Brothers to supply the demand that was coming in from all directions. The work of the schools was a painful one, and wore out the workmen quickly. Death was mowing them down rapidly, whether it was that they were worn out with fatigue, or that God thought them ripe for heaven. It was necessary, therefore, to replace them without delay.

A novitiate was indispensable, and the house at Vaugirard could alone serve this purpose. But it was not to be founded without obstacles. In the seventeenth century, new works met with extraordinary difficulties in their foundation. All those that already existed drew close together so as to keep them out. It was as if the old establishments thought the earth was too small to feed, or too weak to bear any new-comers.

The parish-priest, whose permission M. de la Salle asked before founding his novitiate, forbade him to do it. He feared, no doubt, that this new work, which he might have to support, would be too heavy a burden on the parish. Blessed de la Salle could not give up his plan, and yet he would not disobey the parish-priest, so he had recourse to his customary arms, mortification and prayer, and addressed himself to God, imploring Him to move the will of his

superior. His patience was put to a long test; M. Baudrand was inflexible. He even sent him word that he had better cease from practising useless austerities which would not have the effect of making him, M. Baudrand, change his mind. Happily, God is more easily moved than men. He hears the prayer of His Saints, and when He has yielded, human wills are forced to surrender. M. Baudrand ended by giving his consent, and Blessed de la Salle, in order to forestall further difficulties, got from M^r de Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, the necessary authorization for giving to his house the form of a community.

On the 1st of November 1692, a month after the opening of the novitiate, M. de la Salle gave the habit to five novices and one lay Brother. The Rule was hard both from virtue and from necessity. The house was poor; the doors and windows were badly closed, and let in the cold, and there was no fire in the hearth even in the depth of winter. The food was coarse and insufficient. The Brothers lived on the scraps that were given to them; every day one of them went into Paris to collect their precarious meal, and sometimes he was stopped on the way and deprived of it by starving robbers. Badly lodged, badly fed, the Brothers carried on their persons the livery of poverty. Patched habits, shoes that a beggar would not have picked up on the road-side, and battered old hats composed their costume. But through these rags shone a strange light of majesty, which drew towards them the respect of all good men. If their garments were shabby and soiled, their souls were pure. The bodies suffered, but the hearts were happy, and their countenances beamed with a serene joy which illuminated their whole person. Poverty is only repulsive when it is the outcome of a life dishonored by idleness and vice. When it is a trial cheerfully accepted by Christians and freely chosen in preference to wealth, as the counsellor of wise thoughts and the grand mistress of the supernatural life, it is at once transfigured and wears a celestial grace. So do we see it in the Saints; so it was with Blessed de la Salle and his companions. Many amongst them had followed his example, and left a position of ease, sometimes of affluence, to embrace a life of poverty. All these unavoidable mortifications did not suffice to souls that were eager to suffer for God's sake. To privations they added fastings; to the hard bed they added long watches; to cold and fatigue they added the discipline; to the lowliness of their wretched condition they

added the public confession of their faults. The world does not understand this holy cruelty; it laughs at it, and takes scandal at it; and yet how necessary it is! Blessed de la Salle called young men brought up in the joys of family life, in all the ease that competence gives, and invited them to embrace with him the hardest life that can be imagined. Was it not necessary, in order to ensure their perseverance, that they should first bring nature into subjection, and break all the bonds by which their heart and their senses held them captive? Was it not essential that, before engaging themselves by vows, they should serve an apprenticeship to the hardships they would have to suffer afterwards?

They were to be sent without sack or scrip into distant towns to teach the poor gratis. They would have to suffer hunger and cold and weariness, and was it not well that they should find in their novitiate a condensed experience of their future mode of life? They were likely later on to be assailed by fatigue, and disgust, and sadness, and was it not better, at the generous moment of their sacrifice, to light in their hearts a flame of Divine love which would give them strength through life? It was necessary, also, to arrest at the outset the feeble, the tepid, the cowardly, the fickle, those who were liable to illusions, and all whom any human motive might have led to the community. Those who do not reflect are apt to accuse the founders or superiors of Orders of decoying the uninitiated to their houses by all manners of artifices. The contrary is the truth; their great aim is to guard the entrance to it. The world has so few attractions of its own, that many people seek to get out of it. There is no lack of occasions. But all are not called of God, and false vocations are the pest of religious houses. Blessed de la Salle was to experience this himself. He was, nevertheless, very careful only to accept those novices who gave proofs of real piety and had the strength needful for practising the Rule in its unmitigated rigor. He set the example himself. He was the first to rise, and he waked the other Brothers. Punctual at all the exercises, observing faithfully all that he exacted from others, subjecting himself like them to fasting, to poverty, to the public confession of faults, to penance; he was the last to retire to his cell, and he passed part of the night there in prayer. He kept down the flesh by severest corporal mortifications. More than once, his disciplines were found stained with blood, and the floor of his cell bore traces of his penances during

the night. Inflexible for himself, he was gentle and pitiful for others. Without permitting any relaxation from the Rule, he was so kind in listening to their complaints and raising up their courage, that the Brothers, after a few minutes' conversation with him, would



Blessed de la Salle during the famines of 1693 and 1700 (p. 111 and following). — Bas-relief of Falguière, on the socle of the statue at Rouen. — Drawn by Chapuis.

go away cheered up and full of zeal, ready to walk after him in the way of perfection.

Blessed de la Salle passed the years 1691, 1692, and 1693 in this dear house at Vaugirard. The Paris Brothers came there twice a week, Thursday and Sunday, and rekindled their souls in the fervor that burned on the hearth of the Institute. At whatever hour they

arrived, whatever condition they were in, fagged, perished with cold, or drenched with rain, they joined the exercises of the house, and nothing distinguished them from the novices. The Rule stood them instead of rest and refreshment, and when, next morning, they took leave, and went back to their work, it was with a sense of being strengthened and invigorated.

We may here map in our minds the road over which the servant of God passed so often, and the better to do this, we will call the places by their present names. Starting from the Rue Vaugirard, near Saint Sulpice, Blessed de la Salle passed along the gardens of the Luxembourg as far as the Rue d'Assas opposite which was the monastery of the Carmelite Monks amidst fine wooded grounds.

A little beyond the garden of the Luxembourg, amongst the houses which are now at the entrance of the Rue Notre Dame-des-Champs, was the convent of the Annonciades, a large house which the holy man was one day to live in. The city ended here. The Rue Notre Dame-des-Champs was only built upon one side. At its western angle was the Convent of Saint-Thecla; then the plain began extending on both sides of the present Rue Vaugirard to Vaugirard and Issy. To the left, at the angle of the Rue des Fourneaux, was the Mill of la Pointe; at wide intervals on the same side were other mills still more celebrated; the New Mills, the Butter Mill, the Galette Mill, the Mill of the Three Cornets, favorite promenades of the students of Paris, who came there on holidays. The last-named was the particular meeting-ground of the Jansenists, after whom it was named. Here Father Quesnel used to confer with the heads of the sect.

The wide Rue de Vaugirard was also bordered on the right by fields. First you saw the house of the Child Jesus, and the convent of the Benedictine Nuns, and after that there were no houses until the spot which is now Rue Copreau. The house occupied by the Brothers was in all probability the one that makes the corner of that street and the Rue Vaugirard, for it was long called the House of the Brothers. It became afterwards a famous inn. Blessed de la Salle had himself exercised hospitality there, that generous Christian hospitality which entertains more willingly the poor and the lowly. This house, the first of the village, then stood apart; on one side was a mile-stone with the manorial arms of Saint Genevieve. Up to this point, you were in the parish of Saint Sulpice,

but on one side lay the territory of Grenelle, which belonged to the Abbey of Saint Geneviève-du-Mont; on the other side, the territory of the village of Vaugirard. It is not difficult to picture to oneself this landscape of the environs of Paris.

A number of young men came to knock at the door of the novitiate. Some were drawn thither by curiosity, others by restlessness, some also by the hope of finding comfort and rest. Others again were animated by a certain love of God, but without being called to serve Him in that state of life. Blessed de la Salle was not long in sifting out the true vocations from amidst the false ones. But, indeed, they soon made themselves manifest. The imaginary ones did not persevere; a few days of the Rule sufficed to make them pass out; but their places were filled up by others, and in spite of so many failures, the number of Brothers rose at last to five and thirty.

Blessed de la Salle, poor as he was, fed this large family; or rather he prayed to God, who supplied all his wants. Frugal and austere as the life was, these wants were manifold, for nobody was refused admittance at Vaugirard.

In 1693, a great famine devastated Paris, and the Brothers suffered cruelly from it. The charity that fed them grew cold, and more than once, they were without bread. Blessed de la Salle was not moved from his serenity, nor shaken in his trust. He refused to be better treated than any one else, and in spite of the difficulty he had in feeding his flock, he continued to receive every one who came to his door. But at last the famine became so terrible, that the Brothers ran the risk of dying of hunger. Their food was brought from Paris, and robbers used to lie in ambush and seize it. The environs of Paris were frequented by thieves and vagabonds who roamed about the country seeking herbs wherewith to appease their hunger. Starvation is a bad councillor; it goads to crime. The Vaugirard house, being isolated and badly secured, was not safe.

Blessed de la Salle was obliged to bring the Brothers back to Paris, to the house in the Rue Princesse. They remained there two years, but they were not protected even here from the miseries of the famine. More than once M. de la Salle had to say to the Brothers: "There is no bread in the house." Then they went to the refectory, and said the *Benedicite* before an empty table.

Every day this hard problem had to be solved : “ where were they to get the day’s food ? ” A piece of black bread was a treasure, and all partook of it sparingly. One day, a Brother was sent out with four pence, and this was all the money that remained to the community. He wanted to buy a few vegetables for a last meal. On his way, he saw a house at the door of which a crowd of beggars were gathered round a charitable lady who was distributing alms to them. The Brother joined them. Surprised to see one in his habit asking for alms, the lady questioned him, and hearing that the Brothers were starving, she went to the parish-priest, and obtained relief for them.

But these last resources and every other came to be exhausted, and still the famine raged. Blessed de la Salle was not, however, for one instant disheartened or impatient. He dealt with the necessities of each day as well as he could, and accepted calmly the evil he could not remedy. By a special mercy of God, none of the Brothers fell ill.

In 1694, the famine ended, and the holy father returned to Vaugirard, leaving nine Brothers in Paris to keep the schools. He took with him all the others and the novices. Once more in his solitude, he resumed his exercises as before. He only thought of sanctifying himself and sanctifying his disciples.

The trials which threatened to destroy the community only served to consolidate it. It is always so with the works of God. They thrive on what kills the works of man. In the midst of this great family, the Brothers, far from growing disaffected towards the community, grew more attached to it, and were eager to change their vows of a year and three years into perpetual ones. The reasons they gave for this were very touching. “ Why, ” they asked, “ do we behave towards God as field laborers do to their masters ? The year over, they are quits, and may seek another master, having one foot in the house and one foot out of it. We are like mercenaries. The period of our vows once over, we take back, at our risk and peril, that liberty which is the cause of all our misdoings, and perhaps of our ruin. If we made a complete sacrifice, God would make our hearts stable. ”

Blessed de la Salle with his usual prudence heard these prayers without being in a hurry to answer them. He adjourned his resolution to Trinity Sunday and desired the Brothers to pray well

that he might discern the will of God. Then, the time being come, he chose twelve of the most fervent, and called them to Vaugirard to make a retreat. He remained in their midst, exposing to them the gravity of the engagement they were about to take, questioning them closely. At last, Trinity Sunday arrived. M. de la Salle first renewed vows which consecrated him for life to the holy mission he had embraced, and then, turning to the twelve Brothers, he received their perpetual vows of stability and obedience. The original formula is preserved in the archives of the Institute, written and signed by Blessed de la Salle. It reads as follows :—

“ Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, prostrate with most profound respect before Thine infinite and adorable majesty, I consecrate myself wholly to Thee, to procure Thy glory as far as I possibly can, and as Thou mayest demand of me. And to this effect, I, John Baptist de la Salle, priest, promise and make vow to unite myself and remain in society with the Brothers Nicolas Vuyart, Gabriel Drolin, Jean Partois, Gabriel Charles Résigade, Jean Henry, Jacques Compain, Jean Jacquot, Jean Louis de Marcheville, Michel Barthélemy Jacquin, Edme Leguillon, Gilles Pierre, and Claude Roussel, to keep together and by association free schools in whatever place it may be, even if I should be compelled for this to beg alms, and to live on bread only, or to do for the said Society whatever I may be employed in, whether by the body of the Society, or by the Superiors who may have the guidance thereof. Therefore it is that I vow obedience to the body of the Society, as well as to the Superiors. The said vows, both of association and stability in the said Society, and of obedience, I promise to keep unbroken all my life, in testimony of which I have signed. Given at Vaugirard, this sixth day of June, day of the feast of the most Holy Trinity, of the year one thousand six hundred and ninety-four.

“ *Signed* : DE LA SALLE. ”

Blessed de la Salle, seeing his religious family thus constituted, thought that the time had come for him to resign his title of superior, and descend humbly to the lowest place. He, therefore, assembled the Brothers the very day after they had pronounced their vows, and tried to convince them of the excellence of his purpose. He said, amongst other things, that since God had united them, they ought to seek every means of making that union so

strong that neither the world nor the devil could break it. They should, consequently, put all their confidence in God, and not lean upon a man, who, like a frail reed, breaks and pierces the hand that leans upon him. They ought not, therefore, to depend upon a man like him, who was only a poor priest, with no power, who three years ago had been called back from the gates of death, and might return there in three days. It was advisable that while he was still alive, they should elect another superior, and choose him from amongst themselves, so that the priestly character might not place between them and him a distance which might be detrimental to their union. If they did not decide promptly, and that he should die, all the houses would be independent; there would be as many superiors as there were schools, and the flock would be scattered. If their ecclesiastical Superiors should then give them a chief taken from amongst the clergy, the latter, not having their traditions or their spirit, most likely, would want to make changes in the Rule, and the work would be marred.

The Brothers did not enter into this reasoning. They remembered the experience they had had, and were not at all minded to put the flock in the place of the shepherd, the Brothers above the father, the penitents to direct the confessor. Blessed de la Salle saw at once that they were not convinced, and forthwith began a new discourse more eloquent than the first.

The Brothers, out of humility, did not make any answer. Fancying from this that he had gained them over to his views, and seeing them ready to proceed to the vote, he urged them to make half an hour's prayer in order that the Holy Spirit might direct them in their choice. They prayed, and then the election took place; but the name of the servant of God came out without one dissenting voice. Disconcerted, touched, he reproached the Brothers tenderly with overlooking the true interests of the Institute, and deceiving themselves as to his merits, and left nothing undone to make them see that he was incompetent and unworthy to guide them. He then implored them to vote a second time, in the hopes that the Holy Spirit, moved by his prayer, would direct their choice differently. The Brothers consented, but this very humility displayed by the holy man only confirmed the desire of the Brothers to have him for their superior.

He was again elected with one voice. The Brothers now made

him see that he ought to accept an office which was visibly conferred upon him by God Himself. At his death, which would come too soon for them, however long it was postponed, it would be time enough to put a Brother at their head; meantime, he must resign himself to remain there.

Blessed de la Salle raised his eyes to heaven, and submitted. But still convinced of the danger there was for the Institute in being governed by a priest, he made the twelve Brothers who had elected him sign the following deed:— “ We, the undersigned, Nicolas Vuyart, Gabriel Drolin, etc., after having by the vows we took yesterday associated with M. J.-B. de la Salle, priest, to keep free schools, recognize that, in consequence of these vows and of this association contracted by us, we have chosen for Superior M. John Baptist de la Salle, whom we promise to obey with entire submission, as well as those whom he may appoint our Superiors. We also declare that we do not mean the present election to make any precedent for the future, our intention being that after the said M. de la Salle, and for ever afterwards, no person who is a priest, or has received Holy Orders, shall be admitted amongst us, nor elected as our Superior; that we will never have for Superior any one who is not associated with us, and who has not made vows like us and like all those who will be afterwards associated with us. Given at Vaugirard, the seventh of June, one thousand six hundred and ninety-four. ”

In 1695, the Archbishop of Paris, M^{sr} de Harlay, had died of a fit of apoplexy, and he was replaced by M^{sr} de Noailles, Bishop of Châlons. The latter, after his customary visitation, reformed various abuses that had crept into the administration. He had been above all struck by the multitude of private chapels. Not alone every community, but every private person wanted to have his own chapel in his country house, and have services there. The parish churches were nearly deserted; nobody came there but the poor people, and all who should have given the example were absent. The Archbishop could not allow such an abuse to continue. Divine service ought to be celebrated publicly, so that, all united under the eye of their pastor, the parishioners may mutually encourage one another, and receive more easily the counsels or the commands of the Church.

The Archbishop, consequently, issued a decree interdicting all

private chapels. This threw Blessed de la Salle into the greatest perplexity. He was in the habit of going every morning to say mass in a little chapel close by, and taking the Brothers there. He was dispensed from going to the parish-church, which was distant, and which he could only reach by roads that were impracticable in winter and in bad weather. M. de la Salle went to the Archbishop, and asked permission to have an oratory in his house. He explained the reasons which induced him to ask this favor. It was not only on Sundays, but every day, that he had to take his disciples to mass. Badly clothed, and miserable looking, they attracted the ridicule and rudeness of the people, and it was painful to him to expose them to this trial. Moreover, this long daily promenade was a source of distraction to the novices, and caused great disorder in the interior exercises of the house. The Archbishop appreciated these reasons. He had, besides, been Bishop of Châlons, and had heard of the generous sacrifices made by Blessed de la Salle. He knew his piety and entertained a profound regard for him personally. When he met the Brothers, he always enquired for their Superior, and would add: "He is a holy man; I ask his prayers." Animated with these sentiments, he could not refuse the holy man's request. He gave him leave to have a chapel, confirmed in writing the verbal authorization given by his predecessor to establish the community in Paris, and added to this all the powers necessary for exercising the sacred ministry, a great favor which he granted to hardly anyone.

Blessed de la Salle hastened to prepare a decent oratory in his house. With his own hands he helped to raise an altar, and a Vicar general came to bless the little chapel in which the community was to hear mass and recite the offices both on Sundays and week days.

The parish-priest of Vaugirard was exceedingly angry when he heard this news. So long as private chapels were permitted, he resigned himself to the absence of the Brothers, but when they were suppressed, he counted on them for the edification of his parish. He came to see Blessed de la Salle, and being a Doctor of the Sorbonne and very argumentative, he set to work to prove to him that the Brothers were in duty bound to renounce their new privilege, and to assist at the parochial services.

Blessed de la Salle justified himself. He did not deny the excellence of the principles laid down by the parish-priest; only they did

not apply to him. "If the rule of assisting at the parochial mass is open to an exception," he said, "grant that exception to a group of young fellows who cannot go out of their house without danger. You would grant it willingly to a man in danger of imprisonment. If that man, in order to elude the clutch of the bailiffs in pursuit of him, were to come early in the morning to hear the first mass, you would dispense him with hearing the parochial mass. Let your charity extend the same indulgence to people who cannot appear in public without risking their vocation and exposing their soul to danger. Assuredly, no one deserves it more than these young men, who have not yet shaken off the impressions of the world, and who cannot appear there without feeling its influence, and without being subjected to mockery and insult that their virtue is not yet capable of enduring. You should respect the privilege our Archbishop has given me of erecting a chapel for the community. And this privilege seems to include exemption from the duties of the parish."

There is nothing surprising in those struggles between the parish on one side and the religious Orders on the other. The history of the Church is full of them. The parish is a little world where all the ordinary needs of Christian souls are supplied; there, are found the baptistery, the altar, the confessional and the pulpit. As to the religious Orders, they are intended to meet the extraordinary needs of Christian society and of souls. They form an august and necessary advance guard; they fight in the first ranks; they triumph over obstacles which the parish could never overcome. The parish and the convent are the two poles on which the Catholic world turns.

The parish-priest of Vaugirard would not understand these laws of Christian organism, and revolted against the pretensions of M. de la Salle. His vexation was so great, that he came one day to the house of the Brothers and broke out into bitter complaints against them because they refused to follow the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. Blessed de la Salle tried in vain to appease him. Some time afterwards he calmed down, listened to the reasons which in the first heat of anger he had not understood, and restored all his affection to Blessed de la Salle. It was agreed between them that, every first Thursday of the month, M. de la Salle would come to celebrate a solemn mass of the Blessed Sacrament at the parish, and that he would bring the Brothers with him. He took them to the parish, besides this, on Easter Sunday, and on the feast of St Lam-

bert, patron of the church, and the Brothers, by their modesty, their devotion and their recollection, edified all beholders. M. Bäüyn, director of the little seminary of Saint Sulpice, also took the seminarists to the parish on those days, and said mass for them.

The two venerable priests were to be seen going to the altar one after the other, offering the Holy Sacrifice with the piety of Saints, and distributing Holy Communion to their disciples, who all vied with one another in fervent devotion.





James II. and the Archbishop of Paris
visiting the school of the young Irish boys who were confided to Blessed de la Salle.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LARGE HOUSE (1698-1703).

Blessed de la Salle had been three years at Vaugirard; he had spent there the years 1695, 1696 and 1697, and had taken advantage of the rest he enjoyed there to draw up the Rule and compose his first works. But, during this time, the number of postulants and novices had considerably increased, and from all directions young men were coming to consecrate themselves to the Christian education of childhood. Many amongst them were not actuated by perfectly pure motives, or over-estimated their strength. They had, nevertheless, to be received, to be examined, to be tried; for it was not possible to see at a glance whether they were fit for the office they aspired to fulfil, and the demand for Christian school-masters was so urgent, that it would have been a pity to send away any aspirant without giving him a fair trial.

The house at Vaugirard was too small to lodge a great number of persons; it was also too far from Paris; so Blessed de la Salle was obliged to look for one nearer and larger.

He had noticed in the Rue Vaugirard a vast building which looked

suitable. It was situated a little higher up than the Carmelite convent, on the other side of the street, and was composed of several separate buildings, courts and large gardens. On one side, this house adjoined the gardens of Luxembourg, which then extended much farther than they do now, and on the other, it advanced quite close to Rue Notre Dame-des-Champs, which lay along the fields. The barrier of Vaugirard was very near.

This edifice had been occupied by a community of Annonciade Nuns, of the Institute of Blessed Jane of Valois, known under the name of Our Lady of the Ten Virtues; the Princesses of France used to be educated there. Then, the community became relaxed, and was dispersed. The house remained long uninhabited; it was said to be haunted, and this report frightened away tenants. The landlord, consequently, consented to let it for sixteen hundred francs a year, a very small sum considering the extent of the buildings, but a very large one for Blessed de la Salle, who had nothing. But he was not downcast by this. The house suited him, and he resolved to hire it. He went to see the parish-priest of Saint Sulpice, whose parishioner he was about to become again. The parish had now a new pastor. M. Baudrand had had a paralytic stroke in 1696. Seeing death drawing near, he wished to pass in retirement the few remaining days he had to live, and therefore took steps for placing the parish in good and worthy hands. He knew M. de la Chétardie, a Sulpician who had directed the seminaries of Puy and of Bourges, and who was now prior of Saint Cosme-l'Isle-lès-Tours, a benefice that he held from his grand uncle, councillor clerk of the Parliament of Paris. He was a man of good birth, great information, and with large experience of ecclesiastical affairs. He consented to exchange his priory for the presbytery of Saint Sulpice, and took possession of it on the 13th of February 1696.

M. de la Chétardie brought to his new functions great firmness of character, affable manners, very sound doctrine, and an ardent zeal for the service of God. He soon gained the general esteem. The Archbishop of Paris, M^r de Noailles, whose opinions regarding Rome he did not approve of, confided several important missions to him, and, amongst others, that of obtaining M^{mo} Guyon's retractation, a difficult undertaking, which he succeeded in.

He was the declared enemy of all new fangled theories, and he showed this several years later by dismissing M. Oursel, Superior of

the Community, who had expressed as his opinion in the Sorbonne that the Constitution *Unigenitus* ought not to be received. So long as he lived, he showed a great regard for Blessed de la Salle. He differed from him from time to time as to the manner of governing the Institute, but on every occasion he bore witness to the purity of his faith.

M. de la Chétardie was greatly esteemed by the King, Louis XIV., who liked to converse with him, and in 1702 tried to make him accept the bishopric of Poitiers. He refused the dignity rather than leave the parish. I have sixty-six reasons for declining Your Majesty's offer," was his reply. — "And what are they?" — "My sixty-six years."

M. de la Chétardie had also much intercourse with M^{me} de Maintenon, from whom he got great help for his parish. He turned all his influence to account for his good works, and his charity for the poor was unbounded, and as liberal as it was tender. From the day that he was named parish-priest, he placed all his income in the charity fund, to be distributed amongst the poor, reserving only the bare necessities for the support of himself and a servant.

M. de la Chétardie heard with some surprise Blessed de la Salle's intention of hiring a house at sixteen hundred francs a year, when he had sixty persons to feed and had not the means of paying for bread for them. He could not, however, mistrust the goodness of God, who had always borne them through hard times. The pastor of Saint Sulpice heard all he had to say, and ended by approving of his scheme. He even promised to increase by fifty francs the yearly pension of the Brothers, in order to lighten his expenses.

Blessed de la Salle at once made up his mind, signed the lease, and installed his community in the large house in April 1698.

The house was unfurnished; but there resided in the parish of Saint Sulpice a very charitable lady, M^{me} Voisin, widow of a secretary of State, who was venerated by everybody on account of her abundant almsgiving. On the advice of the parish-priest, the Brothers addressed themselves to her, and she gave them seven thousand francs which served to buy beds, mattresses, curtains, tables and chairs, and in fact all the furniture necessary for the community.

A little chapel formerly used by the Nuns was still standing. They enlarged it by adding a choir, and it was blessed on the 16th

of June 1698, by M^r Godet des Marais, Bishop of Chartres. It was dedicated to St Cassien, who had been himself a school-master in times of persecution, and died a martyr, killed by one of his scholars for having taught them Christian doctrine. The Brothers were not martyrs, it is true; but every day they devoted their health and strength to the children, and wore out their lives teaching them the word of God. No patron could have been better suited to them than the holy school-master of the fourth century.

As soon as they were settled in the big house, Blessed de la Salle set himself to work to multiply the schools, but he wanted first to share with some of the Brothers certain parts of the direction of the house. The twelve Brothers who had pronounced their vows with him were no longer in Paris. He had sent them off to various houses of the Institute as masters and models. He selected two others; one of whom he placed over the novices, while to the other he confided the government of the Paris schools.

He was deceived in his expectations, and we shall see how these two Brothers, by their excessive harshness, discouraged those under them, and by their imprudence raised a storm in which the Order was near perishing. But these drawbacks were not apparent at first, and the Servant of God, confiding generously in the future, thought he might trust them with the responsibility of their grave functions, and turn all his own attention to the general direction of the Institute.

For many years he had been thinking of opening a new school in the parish of Saint Sulpice, for the district of the Incurables. He found a house that appeared to him suitable in the Rue Saint Placide, and the parish-priest consented to hire it. It was soon as full as it could hold. The success of this foundation again set the school-masters in arms. They began by seizing the furniture of the Brothers and of the children. Blessed de la Salle flew to the rescue, but his protestation did not stop the bailiffs. The Brothers were summoned to appear in court; the suit lasted eight months, and during that time the school was closed.

M. de la Salle had been ill, but he recovered just in time to present himself before the magistrate with the Brothers. He spoke for them, and defended their case. The school-masters alleged that they took in children in easy circumstances, who paid for their schooling. This was not true. Blessed de la Salle defied them to

prove it, and consented to lose his suit if they did so. They failed in producing any proof, and were condemned. The school was re-opened. It gained a new prestige, and was soon so large that the four Brothers in charge were no longer sufficient for the work, and two more had to be sent. There were over four hundred children. M. de la Chétardie came to visit the school, and was amazed at so vast a result in so short a time. He could not restrain his enthusiasm. "Ah! my dear sir," he exclaimed to the holy Founder, who had come there to receive him, "what a work is this! Where would this great crowd of children be now if they were not all gathered here? They would be running about the streets, serving their miserable apprenticeship to vice." He then went round the classes, questioning the children on the mysteries of the faith, and he was so delighted with their answers, that he embraced the brothers who had trained them so admirably.

These free schools were the favorite good work of M. de la Chétardie. He visited them once a month, and distributed rewards to the most deserving children. Order, silence, even recollection, reigned in these precincts lately so noisy and disorderly. The good pastor had established a particular custom for these scholars who were so well disciplined and so charming. On the first Saturday of every month, the children of the various classes, walking two and two, went to Saint Sulpice, where lighted tapers were put into their hands; they then walked in procession to the chapel of the Blessed Virgin, where they assisted at a solemn mass founded by M. Olier to place the parish under the protection of the Blessed Virgin. After this, they received each a little blessed loaf that was given by some benevolent ladies, and then they went back to school. This spectacle of a thousand children, formerly left to themselves, and now so well behaved, greatly delighted the parish, and kept alive a warm interest in the free schools. M^{me} Voisin, who visited them sometimes with M. de la Chétardie, contributed large sums of money to them, and up to her death, in 1714, was a devoted benefactress of the Brothers.

There were, therefore, three schools in the parish of Saint Sulpice, and when Blessed de la Salle removed his novitiate to the Rue de Vaugirard, he opened another there. Finally, M. de la Chétardie founded one in the Rue des Fossés-Monsieur-le-Prince, near the Saint Michel gate; but this one only existed three or four years,

when it died out for want of support. The historians of the period state that, in 1698, the Brothers taught in fourteen classes in the parish of Saint Sulpice, and instructed over a thousand children.

The big house in the Rue Vaugirard being easily available for all the plans of Blessed de la Salle, he made haste to found successively in it all the works to which his Institute was to apply itself later.

Not only did he erect there a novitiate for the young Brothers, a mother-house where the Religious from all the other houses could come from time to time, and rest from their labors and renew themselves in a more rigorous exercise of the Rule, a centre from which direction went for the entire Institute, but he established various schools there, schools which still serve as models for all the schools kept by the Brothers at the present day.

For besides the charity-schools, destined to the children of the poor, Blessed de la Salle had opened a boarding-school.

In 1688, James II., driven out of England by William of Orange, took refuge in France, where Louis XIV. extended to him the most sumptuous hospitality, lodging him in the castle of Saint Germain, where the dethroned King kept up his court. Among those who followed him into his retreat were several noblemen, who sought in Catholic France that freedom of religious worship they were deprived of in their native land, and who preferred to cling to the fallen fortunes of their rightful sovereign, rather than sacrifice their faith for the favor of the new ruler. Their children were to be provided for. The occasion sufficed to suggest to Louis XIV. the course to pursue. He acted with all the delicacy that was inherent in his noble nature. The daughters he placed in the convent of the Nuns of Saint Thomas. He might have given the sons positions in the army, but this would have been only partially to do his duty by them. They were in a strange country, unacquainted with its habits and manners, and only imperfectly, if at all, knowing its language. They required to be polished and instructed, and made presentable to society and the court. But, who is competent to fulfil this important task in a manner worthy of France and royalty? These fifty youths must be placed in the hands of none but the best educators in the land. The King consults Cardinal de Noailles upon the selection; the cardinal makes inquiries; he especially relies upon M. de la Chétardie to find the proper persons. "The pastor of Saint Sulpice," says Ravelet, "knew no one who could better assume



James II. visiting the school of the young Irish boys who were confided to Blessed de la Salle.

the responsibility of educating these youths than M. de la Salle. The servant of God was therefore requested to admit them into his own house, and the holy man, who never refused to accomplish the good presented to his zeal, hastened to open a boarding-school." This act did honor to the judgment of M. de la Chétardie, at the same time that it did honor to de la Salle. "It was," says Garreau, "a mark of confidence that did great honor to the venerable man; it was rendering generous testimony to the regularity that reigned in his seminary." It was another occasion for doing a great good, and promoting the glory of God: for this reason it was not to be let slip. Accordingly de la Salle received these hopeful young Irishmen with joy, and cared for them with a truly fatherly love. It is of the utmost importance to understand that in the present instance the man of God was sacrificing no jot or tittle of principle in taking charge of these young men. "The object pursued by the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools," says a competent authority on this point, "was not exclusively the direction of free schools. The zealous Founder already had occasion to make known his real intentions in regard to this matter; he had created a preparatory novitiate; he had established four normal-schools, and he had directed the school of technology of Saint Sulpice." The proposition made by the Archbishop was for him an invitation from Providence to walk in the logical and sure path that he had traced out for himself, in order to diffuse the benefits of a Christian education among a greater number of families. As soon as Notre Dame-des-Vertus was prepared for their accommodation, Louis XIV. sent these noble strangers to him, recommending them to his solicitude. There was no need of such a recommendation; it sufficed that de la Salle had consented to take charge of them; all the rest would follow. With him, to know his duty was to perform it at every risk; and therefore M^{me} de Maillefer, a relative of the Blessed, and intimately acquainted with the history of this important movement in his life, tells us: "He lodged these young noblemen in his own house, and took particular care of their education. He selected Brothers to watch over them, and to give them all the instruction suited to their age and their position in society, so that, in a short while, they were able to fill the various offices to which they were appointed."

Under the care of the Brothers, those young men made rapid progress. M. de la Chétardie frequently visited them; so did M^{me} de

Maintenon and the Bishop of Chartres. They spoke to the Archbishop and the Monarch of their advancement in studies, of their order and regularity, of the consideration with which they were cared for, of the ability and modesty of the Brothers, and, above all, of the saintly life and the various accomplishments of M. de la Salle. As the young exiles had made the cause of James II. their own, he was not indifferent to anything concerning them. The recitals of M^{me} de Maintenon or of the Archbishop interested him. No doubt his first intention was not to see them till their studies were completed, and to find more pleasure and satisfaction in the first surprise occasioned by their polished behavior. A sense of deference toward his royal host would suggest as much; it would be a compliment to his judgment to take it for granted that they were well cared for. But his curiosity is excited by all he hears. He must see these admirable educators; he must behold with his own eyes their discipline, their new methods of teaching, and their behavior. So, one day, in company with the Archbishop of Paris, he pays a visit to Notre Dame-des-Vertus. History has recorded the result of that visit. James II. was pleased with everything. His heart overflowed with joy on seeing these young men so well cared for; he expressed his satisfaction at all he beheld; he congratulated M. de la Salle upon his success, "and testified his gratitude to him in the most honorable terms."

What were the methods which the great educator used in this, his first boarding-school, and which so elicited the admiration of all? What was the course he pursued? We do not know. It is to be regretted that the plan of studies then followed by Blessed de la Salle has not been preserved; but we are assured by his earliest biographers that he retained for himself the direction both of masters and pupils, that he took personal direction of the principal courses, and that he earnestly endeavored to develop the noble qualities with which heaven had endowed these students.

Blessed de la Salle was, indeed, looked upon as the father of the young. People had recourse to him in all difficult emergencies, and although the direction of the primary schools was his work of predilection, he could not restrict himself within that single frame, too narrow for his all-embracing charity.

Parents who had unmanageable or rebellious children addressed themselves to him, and confided them to him to be reformed. The

Fathers of the Oratory brought him a young Abbé who had been entrusted to them, and whose bad habits they had found it impossible to cure. This young Abbé was eighteen years of age, and belonged to one of the great families; he had an uncle a bishop; he was therefore likely to be called to ecclesiastical dignities; but he had no inclination for the priesthood. Confined in the house of the Oratorians, Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Jacques, he contrived to escape constantly from their supervision. He broke open the doors, he jumped over the walls, and ran away to pass the night in dissipation and gambling. The Fathers, despairing of being able to tame this wild nature, bethought them of handing him over to Blessed de la Salle, who passed for having marvellous graces for the training of the young.

He received this young man, and put him into the novitiate. The young libertine was at once impressed by the appearance of the Brothers, by their piety, their recollection, their fervor. His heart, hitherto closed against every good influence, opened as if by miracle. M. de la Salle had long conversations with him. He made him blush for his past conduct, then he moved him to weep over it, and inspired him with such contrition and such a love of perfection, that, of his own accord, he asked to follow the exercises of the novitiate. He took upon himself the lowliest offices, he kissed the feet of the Brothers, ate on the ground out of penance, and was always on the look out for mortifications. In a short time he became the model of the community, and he who had been the least, soon outstripped all in his ardent pursuit of perfection.

Full of gratitude to the community where he had obtained his conversion, he aspired to the happiness of passing the rest of his life there, and entreated Blessed de la Salle as the greatest favor to give him the habit. The holy priest was too prudent to yield at once to his desire; he feared lest this sudden fervor might be one of these youthful flames quickly kindled and quickly extinguished; moreover, he could not consent to engage in so humble a career a young man whose family meant to push him on to high ecclesiastical functions. He must at least have the consent of the family. The young Abbé employed every means to obtain it. He wrote to his parents, and had recourse to the good offices of the Bishop, his uncle; but all to no purpose. The pride of his family could not brook the idea of their name being buried under so despised a

calling. His letters remained unanswered. One of his relatives came to see him and used all his eloquence to disgust him with a condition so unworthy of his rank; but nothing could shake his determination. Time went by without abating his ardor. At last, as his family, worn out by his entreaties, took the line of not answering him, he took this silence for consent and, redoubling his supplications to Blessed de la Salle, he persuaded him to grant his prayer. He received the habit, and when he saw himself clothed in the shabby soutane— he chose the most threadbare he could find— when he saw his feet in the hobnailed shoes, and beheld himself attired in the complete livery of poverty, his joy was extreme. He would not have exchanged his hat for that of a cardinal, he declared. But his happiness was of short duration. His family were deeply mortified on hearing of what he had done. They dissembled their anger for a time, when one day they came down unexpectedly, and carried him off by force to another community, where he died two years later. This fact, which is by no means an isolated one, proves that Blessed de la Salle had a great grace for converting young souls, and great zeal in the exercise of it. He had the gift of touching hearts.

The parish-priest of Saint Hippolyte, in the faubourg Saint Marcel, having seen the good which the schools of Blessed de la Salle were doing at Saint Sulpice, wished to have some in his parish. He offered to defray the necessary expenses. The Servant of God sent him two Brothers, and the school was opened towards the year 1700.

This pastor of Saint Hippolyte was a man full of zeal. He desired to extend far beyond his own parish the benefits of the Christian schools, and was above all concerned at the great need there was of them in the country. He spoke of this to Blessed de la Salle, who in turn related to him the effort he had made at Rheims to found a seminary for country school-masters, and how it had failed. He was ready to renew the attempt; but he had no money. The pastor of Saint Hippolyte at once volunteered to find the money, and the foundation was made towards the year 1700, simultaneously with the opening of the school. A person named Lemoine hired a house in the Rue de Lourcine. The deed was first made out in the name of Brother Vuyart, and then replaced by a regular lease on the 22nd of April 1701 to M. de la Salle. The pastor of Saint Martin, of the Cloister of Saint Marcel, contributed to this foundation. Blessed de

la Salle confided the direction of it to Brother Nicolas Vuyart, one of the oldest members of the Institute, who, with Brother Gabriel Drolin, had first taken the vows. The young men from the country were all sent to this house, and the seminary was established. These young school-masters rose at half past four, went to bed at nine, and divided their day between prayer and study.

They had meditation, spiritual reading and examination of conscience; they learned reading, writing, arithmetic and plain-chaunt. They also learned the art of teaching, under the supervision of Brother Gervais, who was director of the school. They retained their secular dress, and had no expense but their clothing. It was, in fact, a Normal School such as may now be found in nearly every country in Europe and America, except that this one was entirely gratis, and under Christian direction.

This establishment had difficulty in getting on. The landlord of the house first took an action against Brother Vuyart; the writing-masters took another, no doubt because he taught the boys to write. But the influence of the parish-priests of Saint Hippolyte and Saint Martin enabled him to get the better of these attacks. Ruin came from another quarter where it was least to be expected.

The parish-priest of Saint Hippolyte, having fallen ill, and feeling death approaching, wished to secure the future of his foundation. He could not bequeath his fortune to Blessed de la Salle, who was already known as the Superior of the Brothers; he could not leave it to the latter, who had not yet obtained Letters patent and did not constitute a personality capable of inheriting, so he made Brother Vuyart his heir.

It was this bequest of the parish-priest of Saint Hippolyte that ruined Brother Vuyart. It gave him a temptation to avarice; he yielded to the temptation, and appropriated the property to himself. When Blessed de la Salle, on the death of the parish-priest, came to make arrangements with him, he sent him about his business with the remark that the fortune belonged to him, and that he would know how to spend it according to the wishes of the testator. M. de la Salle was too much accustomed to trials, and too faithful in following his master, Jesus Christ, to be surprised when, like Him, he was persecuted by his enemies and denied by his friends. He received the affront in silence, and refused to take any legal step to

gain possession of the property which, under the name of Brother Vuyart, was destined to him.

This event caused the downfall of the Seminary for country school-masters, which had been in existence from five to six years. Those who were supporting it, on witnessing the conduct of its director, withdrew their contributions, and the young men all left.

Brother Vuyart threw aside his habit, had himself released from his vows, drove away his companion, and continued the schools on his own account. He kept them on for several years. At last, stung by remorse and by want, he made an effort to get back into the Brotherhood, but did not succeed. He fell ill the day after the death of Blessed de la Salle, and died five months later.

The holy founder had, we see, the intuition of all the institutions that could be useful for primary education, and which at this day are flourishing. He conceived them, he realized them, he cast their mould and drew up their Rule; then a variety of circumstances brought about their dissolution. Providence enabled his genius to forecast them; but his age could not understand them, and he was only permitted to sketch their outline, and to lay the first stones of the edifice which was not to be built up for a century later.

Besides the schools destined to little children, Blessed de la Salle opened, at M. de la Chétardie's desire, a Sunday-school for young men who were at work in their shops all the week round, and had only Sunday free for seeking instruction. These Sunday-schools already existed in Holland; but in France they were as yet unknown¹. The servant of God at once saw the great value of them, and left nothing undone to ensure their success. To draw young men away from the pernicious amusements to which they were sure to be tempted in their leisure hours, it was necessary to provide them with the attraction of solid instruction, which might be of use to them in their business. It was, therefore, agreed that they should be taught not only reading and writing, but also arithmetic, geometry and drawing. This education was tantamount to what is now called "higher primary." Blessed de la Salle chose two intelligent Brothers who had a taste for the arts; he procured lessons for them, and put them at the head of this Christian academy.

¹ Sunday-schools for religious teaching were first established in Milan by St Charles Borromeo, in 1564. See Buisson, art. *Écoles du dimanche*.

This school was opened in 1699, by special permission of the Archbishop. It was held in the big house of the Rue Vaugirard, which then served as novitiate, and it took place every Sunday at mid-day. All young men under twenty might attend. The lesson lasted two hours; it was followed by the catechism, and then one of the Brothers made a short spiritual exhortation. The school was such a success that it soon numbered two hundred scholars. Unfortunately it did not last.

The success of these Brothers excited their vanity and their covetousness, and they formed the design of leaving the Institute and opening a school where they would get other payment for their trouble than the unseen rewards of the world to come. They informed their superior of this intention, who, needless to say, left nothing undone to turn them away from it. He spoke to them of their vocation, of the perfect life which they had embraced, and which they were going to abandon for the miserable gratifications of life in the world. He reminded them of their engagements, and strove to awaken in their hearts sentiments of faith and piety, as well as a little tenderness for himself, whom they were forsaking and grieving, and whom they would compel to close a school which had cost him so much care and struggle. But he pleaded in vain. His arguments broke against their hardened hearts. One of the Brothers ran away; the other lingered on a few months, and then rejoined his companion.

Blessed de la Salle was in dire perplexity. The parish-priest of Saint Sulpice attached great importance to these Sunday-schools, which he regarded as the outcome of his own thought, and which shed a certain lustre on the parish.

M. de la Salle at once selected from amongst the other Brothers the one who was best fitted to replace the two deserters, and wished him to have the lessons necessary to qualify him for teaching in the Sunday-school; but the Brother recoiled from the proposal with insurmountable reluctance. These new accomplishments must be dangerous, it seemed to him, since they had been the ruin of two of his comrades, and he preferred to continue in the humbler work that he had so far been devoted to. Not only was he filled with this sentiment of fear himself, but he communicated it to the other Brothers so strongly, that the holy founder could not find one amongst them who would consent to undertake the new work.

They drew up a note setting forth the dangers of the Sunday-schools, and entreated him to take them into account, not doubting, they said, but that he would agree with them. Blessed de la Salle made no answer. Their minds were too warped just then to give up their prejudices. He went to the parish-priest of Saint Sulpice, and laid the difficulty before him; but M. de la Chétardie, who was already annoyed, would listen to nothing. He accused M. de la Salle of being the cause of the departure of the two Brothers, the resistance of the others, and the closing of the school.

The holy man knew not what to say in his own defence. It occurred to him a few days later to go back to the parish-priest and show him the petition the Brothers had drawn up in order to justify their resistance. This simple action was wrongly interpreted. The pastor received him more coldly than ever, and accused him of having himself written the document, or ordered it to be written. Blessed de la Salle defended himself, but the parish-priest, carried away by his temper, called him a liar. The servant of God received the unmerited outrage with his usual serenity, and contented himself with answering cheerfully: "Well, sir, it is with that lie on my lips that I am going to say mass." And he went to the church, and offered up the holy sacrifice.

He did not, however, give up all hope for the Sunday-schools. By dint of seeking, he found a Brother who made the sacrifice of his personal tastes, and consented to acquire the necessary knowledge. The school was re-opened, and was very soon as largely attended as before. Young men flocked to it from all directions, and passed the whole day there in pious exercises, studies and amusements. They forgot their bad habits, kept the day holy, lost their vices little by little, and many became thoroughly converted from evil courses. This school was removed in 1703 to the parish of Saint Paul, where the jealousy of the writing-masters finally caused it to be given up.

Good was being done, but always in spite of obstacles. As to the Brothers who abandoned Blessed de la Salle, they were not long in reaping the penalty of their fault. Thus, the Brother who left the Sunday-school in order to make money did not succeed in his purpose. He led a wandering, wretched life, and died of want in 1709, in the parish of Saint Roch, without even being able to receive the Sacraments.

The greatest trial of the Saints is not the opposition of their natural adversaries, but of those who share their own sentiments and, like them, are servants of God. When the wicked persecute them, they have no reason to be surprised; but when the righteous torment them, they are sometimes startled and disturbed. Is not righteousness the same for all men, and can there be two ways of understanding it? Thus it happens that when the founder of an Order meets with opposition from men whose sanctity he venerates, and from whom he is accustomed to receive advice, he begins to doubt everything, and asks himself if he is not the sport of his own illusions.

God permits these conflicts, and the history of the Church offers numerous examples of them. Blessed de la Salle, whose patience was destined to be fashioned, so to speak, in every sense, and hammered out on every side, had to endure persecutions from those who had long been his friends and protectors. The parish-priest of Saint Sulpice himself, notwithstanding his devotion to the Brothers, took sides with the adversaries of Blessed de la Salle. We have shown how great were the virtues of M. de la Chétardie; it is needless, therefore, to say that malice went for nothing in this opposition. He simply did not take the same view of the constitution of the Brotherhood of the Christian schools as their holy founder. He saw things from a lower level, and his glance did not reach so far. He admired the good that was being done in the schools, and seconded it to his utmost; but, like the Archbishop of Rheims on a former occasion, he would fain have restricted the community within the limits of his own parish, or at least within those of the diocese. It was his predecessors who had called the Brothers to Paris; he himself had helped them to set up their schools, and he was still helping them. He considered himself as their chief, and would have liked to manage them according to his own ideas. He would not have prevented them from establishing themselves elsewhere, and going wherever they were wanted; but if he had had his way, each school would have been dependent on the parish-priest or the bishop of the diocese, without having any other links but those of a common end, so that the totality of the houses would not have been one vast Institute governed by an independent power.

The parish-priests of Paris had had, up to the present, the exclusive management of the charity-schools, and had contrived even to

emancipate themselves from the authority of the precentor. After such a victory, they were but little disposed to recognize a new authority which had neither the majesty nor the prestige of the former one. As the principal establishment of the Brothers was in the parish of Saint Sulpice, it was there that the struggle was to begin.

Blessed de la Salle could not yield. He was not jealous of his authority; we have seen how again and again he strove to pass it on to another, how humble he was and how eager to be forgotten; but so long as he was at the head of the Institute, he was bound to defend its interests. He had, moreover, special lights for governing it which God reserves to founders, and which, to those who receive them, bear the character of unerring certainty. To make these lights prevail, was to watch over the treasure that had been entrusted to him; to abandon them, was to prove himself unfaithful to his mission.

Blessed de la Salle could not, therefore, sacrifice the Rule he had established, and subsequent events proved how wise he was in remaining inexorable. The Church of France was about to be divided by Jansenism, and was beginning to feel the first symptoms of the heresy. Several bishops were to fall victims to its seductive wiles. What might not have happened if the Brothers had been under their separate and exclusive direction, without being supported by the bond that bound them to the mother house? The greater number would have been, in their turn, drawn into error and revolt, and the faith of the people would have been grievously weakened. They were preserved from the contagion by the orthodoxy of their founder, who remained immovable in his perfect allegiance to the Holy See. In several dioceses, the Brothers were persecuted because of their attachment to the decisions of Rome; but they stood firm, and their union secured their independence.

In holding out against the plans proposed to him, Blessed de la Salle did not certainly foresee the final consequences of his firmness, any more than his adversaries foresaw the fatal results which the triumph of their reforms would have produced. Both sides were actuated by straight-forward motives; but M. de la Salle, having an Institute to found, had special inspiration to guide him, and he was resolved, even at the price of his honor and his peace, to carry out to the end the mission that had been confided to him.

The conflict broke out in regard to certain administrative details. Blessed de la Salle had placed at the head of the Novitiate a Brother whose imprudent zeal did not sufficiently consider the relatively weak virtue of his disciples. When the servant of God was there, he softened this indiscreet severity; but during an absence of some days which he had to make on the business of the community, the director of novices, feeling himself no longer restrained, gave way to the vehemence of his temper, and overpowered some of the young men with exaggerated penances. These latter, instead of awaiting the return of their father, broke forth into loud complaints, and went off to the parish-priest of Saint Sulpice, to whom they related the treatment they had suffered, and the marks of which they still bore. They did not accuse Blessed de la Salle, who was absent, and for whom they had the deepest tenderness; but M. de la Chétardie, who had had some differences of opinion with him, held him responsible for the faults of his subordinates. He demanded a written deposition of the plaintiffs, and then waited for an occasion to make use of it.

The director of the Paris schools, Brother Ponce, was himself much too severe. He was of a hard nature from which Blessed de la Salle had to suffer later on. One Sunday, he went with the Brothers to the Novitiate, where he imposed a rigorous penance on a young novice who was learning in the schools under his direction. The novice made his escape, and carried his grievance straight to the parish-priest.

On hearing this new complaint, M. de la Chétardie no longer had any doubt but that these results were the effect of an organized system of direction imposed by the founder himself, and as he already found fault with his administration, he concluded that he was totally unfit to govern. Without examining farther into the affair, he received the new declaration, joined it to the others, and drew up a brief which he forwarded to the ecclesiastical authorities. It is very likely that he seized this opportunity to lodge his own complaint, and give his opinion on several points of M. de la Salle's administration. The latter was accused not only of having made a bad choice in the directors of the Brothers, and of having ordered them to be too severe; his doctrine was incriminated, and the facts brought against him were laid to the account of a mistaken piety; the accusers went so far as to charge him with Quietism.

Cardinal de Noailles occupied at this date the Archiepiscopal See of Paris. He was a well-informed and charitable man; but of weak character and vascillating mind. As Bishop of Châlons, he had approved of Quesnel's moral reflexions; as Archbishop of Paris, he had condemned the Jansenist book of Abbé Barcos. Some time afterwards, he took up arms against the Jesuits, and caused divers propositions taken from their writings to be condemned in the Assembly of the clergy of 1700. In 1713 he refused to receive the Bull *Unigenitus*; some months later, he revoked the approbation he had given to Quesnel's book. In 1717 he put himself at the head of those who appealed against the Bull *Unigenitus*, and published a Pastoral letter which was condemned in Rome. Finally, he repented; he made his submission, wrote a touching letter to the Pope, retracted his appeal, and kept all his promises to the Holy See.

Such a man was likely to be easily prejudiced. Although at the outset he was favorable to Blessed de la Salle, to whom he had granted extended powers, he now lent his ear to the charges that were brought against him, and ordered his Vicar general, M. Pirot, to enquire into these complaints. M. Pirot was Doctor and Professor at the Sorbonne, Canon and Chancellor of Paris, and seventy-one years of age; he seemed just the right man to carry out prudently so delicate a mission. For an entire month, once a week, he came to the Novitiate, armed with powers from the Archbishop, and obliged the Brothers to reveal to him on their oath all the grievances they had. Blessed de la Salle was then absent, probably at Troyes, founding a school. He returned while the enquiry was going on; but, humble and resigned, as usual, he asked no questions, did not defend himself, but waited patiently on the good pleasure of Providence.

The investigation proved favorable to him. All the Brothers loved him dearly; they were living in peace, happy in their calling, attached to their Rule, and, with the exception of three who were discontented with the others because they were discontented with themselves, nobody complained.

Admitting even that complaints were grounded, they did not inculpate M. de la Salle, whose gentleness every one praised, and yet the holy priest was alone made responsible. Calumny had its own way against this silent man, who did not answer his accusers, but

confined himself to praying and doing good. Petty jealousies excited by his virtues had gathered round him, and were now circumventing him, and shutting out the remembrance of his works. M. Pirot allowed himself to be deceived, and carried the Archbishop with him. Soon after, Blessed de la Salle went to pay his respects to the prelate, who received him with his usual politeness, but after a few minutes' conversation, without a word of reproach or explanation to account for his decision, he remarked quietly: " Sir, you are no longer Superior of your community; I have provided it with another." Blessed de la Salle felt the blow thus harshly dealt him, and for which nothing had prepared him. He did not try to parry it, he asked no questions, but withdrew in silence, blessing God who had permitted him to be humiliated. He had often desired to be relieved of the burden which weighed so heavily on him. His prayer was heard.

He came home, and said not a word to any one about what had occurred. M. Pirot, who had been charged with the enquiry, was also charged to execute the sentence. He sent word privately to Blessed de la Salle what day he would come and install the new Superior, and Blessed de la Salle, fearing some resistance on the part of the Brothers, merely announced to them that there was to be a great assembly, without saying for what purpose.

The first Sunday of Advent 1702, all the Brothers of Paris were collected in the large house. A hall had been prepared and decorated. The Brothers were wondering who would be the high personage that was expected, and what ceremony he was going to preside over. Blessed de la Salle, cheerful and smiling, as usual, superintended every thing. At four o'clock, after Vespers, a coach stopped at the door. The Vicar general, M. Pirot, alighted, accompanied by a young Abbé. M. de la Salle received him with due honor, and conducted him to the seat that had been prepared for him. His companion sat down beside him, and the bell rang to call in the Brothers, who were all curiosity as to what was going to happen.

When silence reigned in the hall, M. Pirot opened speech.

Accustomed to address audiences that were often hard to manage, and foreseeing resistance, he proceeded cautiously, and began by extolling M. de la Salle, proclaiming him the man chosen by God to found the work, and carry it to its present point. He spoke

of his virtues, the labors he had undergone, the services he had rendered, and was lavish of praise. The Brothers listened with delight while their beloved Father was spoken of in these terms, and drowned M. Pirot's voice at intervals with their bursts of applause.

But suddenly the tone changed, the orator turned from Blessed de la Salle to the new companion he had brought with him, and began his panegyric. M. Bricot, whom he had the pleasure of introducing to them, was a young priest from Lyons, full of virtues and merit; he trusted they would obey him in all things, for he was worthy of their esteem and confidence. The Brothers, at first surprised and mystified by this discourse about a stranger, pricked up their ears and began to see through its meaning. The moment they perceived what the orator was about, one of the principal among them, unable to contain himself, advanced respectfully to M. Pirot, and informed him in the name of all that they already had a Superior, and begged that he would not think of giving them another.

M. Pirot, quite unmoved, waved him aside with a gesture of his hand, and, resuming his discourse, went on to speak with precision of the order he had to execute, and the duty it was on their side to obey it. It was, in fact, a formal command.

Then began the tumult: "M. de la Salle is our only Superior; we will have no other!" cry out the Brothers and novices in chorus; and they add that the Archbishop must have been deceived, otherwise he never would have come to a decision so contrary to justice and their unanimous desire. The holy founder, grieved by this resistance, raised his voice to quiet the uproar, and reminded the Brothers of their promises to him. In virtue of that authority invested in him, he requested them to submit to the order conveyed to them, and not set an example of obstinacy and rebellion.

Under other circumstances, his words would have had their immediate effect; but the Brothers had now strong reasons to oppose to them, and they spoke them out boldly. They had submitted themselves to him precisely because he had their whole confidence, but they could not transmit that confidence and his authority at a moment's notice to another. He had created the work, he had directed it; what proof was there that he had lost the

grace of God, and that another had obtained it? The motive in changing him was to change the Rule. But they were attached to the Rule, and it would be unfair, as well as cruel, to come now and overthrow the work to which they had devoted themselves, and the state they had embraced.

All this clamor proved to demonstration how false were the reports on which the Archbishop's sentence had been founded. If the Rule had been too severe, and M. de la Salle a hard and harsh master, his disciples would assuredly not be so hot in his defence.

M. Pirot ought to have seen at once the mistake he had made, and withdrawn. But the battle had begun, and self-love was up in arms.

He had no sound arguments to oppose to those of the Brothers, so he entrenched himself behind the principle of authority. He took out the Archbishop's orders, sealed with his seal, and read them. This deed, in which were set forth the so called misdemeanors of Blessed de la Salle, increased the tumult. The Brothers could not contain their indignation against those who had traduced their Superior, and they appealed from the Archbishop duped to the Archbishop in possession of the truth.

The master of Novices, whose imprudent direction had brought about the complaints, interfered in his turn, and began loudly to defend his Superior; but he only drew upon himself the wrath of M. Pirot, who looked on him as the author of the unpleasant position in which he, M. Pirot, found himself. He silenced him rudely. "What! you dare to speak, you who are the primary cause of all this scandal, and unworthy of the post you hold!" The unlucky Brother held his peace and withdrew.

But there was another person present, who was to the full as much embarrassed. This was M. Bricot, who had come here to be solemnly installed, and who, instead of the honors he anticipated, got nothing but snubs. It was plain that nobody had the least intention of obeying him, and the discussion was only increasing the antipathy of the Brothers for a Superior who was being forced upon them. The latter felt he was playing a ridiculous part while his rights and titles were being fought over. He endeavoured to put an end to the scene by begging M. Pirot to leave the Brothers their Superior, adding that, for his part, he would never consent to take the

keys of a house where the hearts were closed against him. The conflict lasted a long time. The Brothers would not yield, and M. Pirot would not own himself beaten. But the one who suffered most of all was M. de la Salle.

This public testimony of esteem and affection from his disciples hurt his humility. The rebellion distressed him. Besides this, the hopes he had cherished of being relieved of his burden, and consecrating the rest of his days to solitude and prayer, were again disappointed.

He did not despair, however, of bringing the Brothers round in time, and when he was accompanying M. Pirot to the door, he told him so. But the Brothers overheard the remark, and at once flatly contradicted him. "Our determination is bound up with our vow," they declared; "in keeping to the one, we feel that we are being faithful to the other. We will have no Superior but our father. If another is forced upon us, let that other bring new subjects with him, for we are all resolved to walk out of the house."

M. Pirot took his departure, carrying with him the conviction that the bond between M. de la Salle and the Brothers was indissoluble, and that it would be impossible to remove him without destroying the community. As he was a most worthy man, he would not for any consideration, any more than the Cardinal, have ruined a work which was visibly blessed of God, and which produced excellent fruits. There only remained for him to get out of the dilemma as well as he could.

The authority of the Cardinal had been openly defied, and it had been said that he had been misled. Alas! it was just at this moment that he was himself publicly declaring that the Church "might be mistaken, in asserting that the condemned propositions were in Jansenius;" and some years later, he was to appeal from the Pope to the Council, in regard to the Bull *Unigenitus*.

M. Pirot could not do less than bear witness to the close union which subsisted between Blessed de la Salle and his disciples, and he added that if it were the same in every community, it would be Paradise, and all the inmates saints. This eulogy of the Brothers was fatal to the saintly founder. The Archbishop grew more incensed; he was angry with his Vicar general, whose vehemence and awkwardness he blamed; with the Brothers, whose resistance

held his episcopal authority suspended; with M. de la Salle, whose virtues had been a scandal to less perfect men.

It was not that M. de la Salle did not humble himself, and try to disarm his adversaries. Fearing lest he should be held responsible for the attachment that his children bore him, he went to the Archbishop, fell on his knees before him, and with tears begged pardon for the Brothers' resistance to his orders. The prelate remained some time as if struck dumb.

He knew how true was Blessed de la Salle's assertion, but it cost him too much to own it; he stood up, and leaving the holy man prostrate before him, walked away without uttering a word. Blessed de la Salle accepted uncomplainingly this new outrage; he went home, and resumed the tenour of his life.

Meantime, the conflict continued. The Brothers of Paris resolved to interfere and put an end to it. They had recourse to the parish-priest, whose prudence and devotion to the Institute they were sure of. M. de la Chétardie in his turn confided the delicate negociation to a priest of the community of Saint Sulpice, afterwards Bishop of Châlons, the Abbé Madot.

The latter undertook, without making any noise, to bring the Brothers to an appearance of submission, which, without exacting from them the sacrifice of the points they held to, would save, at least outwardly, the honor of the Archbishop, if, indeed, the honor of authority consists in never being in the wrong, or rather in never acknowledging it. The Abbé Madot set off to the novitiate, and took the Brothers apart, one by one, and placed before them the arguments best calculated to make an impression on them. Young and simple and straight-forward, they would have been easily persuaded, had not their mistrust been aroused: as it was, they flatly refused to lend themselves to any compromise. In vain did the Abbé repeat that their resistance was an insult to the Archbishop. They were willing to make the most abject apologies for the insult; but they had no mind to change the Rule, nor to accept a new Superior, and they must have written guarantees. At last they agreed to meet half way. It was settled that they would wait in a body on M. Pirot, acknowledge their misbehaviour, and accept the new Superior, but on the express condition, "in writing," that this new Superior should only have a nominal title, should only come to the community for form's sake, should

change nothing, and that Blessed de la Salle should retain all his power.

After fighting a whole morning, the Abbé Madot, seeing that he could get no more, had to content himself with this result. He marched off the twelve Brothers to the Sorbonne, where Abbé Pirost was. They presented their petition on their knees, while giving him to understand that their submission was distinctly conditional. He seemed satisfied.

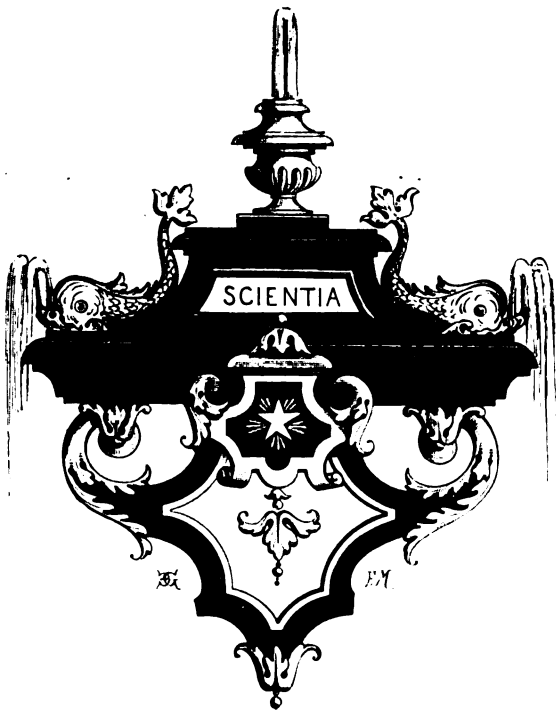
This scene took place on the 8th of December. The following Sunday, the Abbé Pirost came to the house with the Abbé Bricot; he again held forth to the Brothers, then the whole community went to the chapel, and they sang the *Te Deum*. After this formality, the new Superior took leave. He came back once more at the end of three months, to put in an appearance, and after that he never was seen again. The Archbishop gave him another employment.

So the conflict was settled to the satisfaction of both parties. Blessed de la Salle, however, anxious to prevent any future repetition of the same complaints, modified the severity of the Rule, and adopted certain suggestions that were made to him by his ecclesiastical superiors. The Rule was much less severe than that of la Trappe, but he had thought it necessary to conquer nature in order that grace might superabound. He humbly submitted his own opinion to the remonstrances of others.

The master of novices, whose imprudent severity had brought about all these vexations, bore the penalty of it. His excentric and capricious disposition could not long support the yoke he had imposed upon himself. He asked Blessed de la Salle to send him to another house and give him charge of a school. This was refused him. He was irritated, led away another Brother, and the two made their escape. They went to la Trappe, and asked to be admitted as Religious.

The abbey was then governed by Jacques de la Cour, one of the successors of M. de Rancé, who had been dead two years. The Abbot was too prudent to admit two Brothers still clothed in the habit of their order without the permission of their Superior. He wrote to M. de la Salle, thereby giving him news, for the first time, of the missing disciples, about whom he had been full of anxiety. Blessed de la Salle wrote to the Abbot, telling him the reasons of their departure, and entreating him not to admit them. The Ab-

bot, of course, refused them. The two wanderers came back to their Superior, and the master of novices was sent to Chartres, where he died soon afterwards of a horrible disease which was looked upon by the whole community as the just punishment of his faults. His companion, in a short time, left the Brotherhood.





Blessed de la Salle giving the child Jesus as a model to his first novices.

CHAPTER VIII.

BLESSED DE LA SALLE IN THE FAUBOURG SAINT-ANTOINE.

It was in 1703 that Blessed de la Salle left the parish of Saint Sulpice to go to the faubourg Saint Antoine. He was only a tenant in the house of the Rue Vaugirard, and he felt all the inconveniences of this precarious situation. So much so, that a few days after his installation, he had a procession in the garden to implore of Almighty God to grant him a settled abode, at least for his novices.

All the Brothers walked in the procession, and he himself followed, wearing his surplice. They recited the little Office of Our Lady, the Litanies, several Psalms and the *Memorare*. Their persevering prayer seemed for a moment to be granted. The large house was in every way suitable to their purpose; its position was good, and its extensive buildings afforded ample accommodation. The landlord urged them to buy it, and even promised to let them have it for forty five thousand francs, though it was well worth twice that sum. The opportunity was tempting, but how could one who had given all he possessed to the poor, and who was employing

his last resources to feed his disciples, bring forward so considerable a sum? Suddenly Blessed de la Salle was informed that a charitable person had just left him the sum of fifty thousand francs; all difficulties seemed at an end, and it seemed as if he were about at last to carry out his project.

However, when he attempted to claim the money, new difficulties arose; the adverse influences that had so often opposed his projects were again powerful enough to prevent him from receiving the sum that was due to him, or rather God judged that an heroic act of resignation on the part of his servant, would be for the new-born Institute a firmer and more solid beginning than the acquisition of any house, however advantageous it might appear. The money bequeathed to him could not be obtained, and he found himself as poor and as embarrassed as he was before.

Meantime, the house occupied by the Brothers in the Rue de Vaugirard had been sold, and they were now obliged to leave it; but Blessed de la Salle, seeing himself and his numerous community absolutely without a shelter, without help or resources for the future, begged the new landlord to allow him to remain, until he could find another abode. The landlord, who was a good man, gave the required permission, but happily, at the end of six months, the holy founder discovered in the faubourg Saint Antoine, rue de Charonne, in front of the Convent belonging to the Dominican Nuns of the Cross, a house, with some drawbacks, it is true, but sufficiently large to lodge his community. On the 20th of August 1703, after having received the permission of the parish-priest of Saint Paul, in whose parish the house was situated, he took possession of his new home, hoping that by leaving the parish of Saint Sulpice, where he had encountered so many difficulties, he might be forgotten by his enemies.

Not having asked leave to have a chapel in his own house, Blessed de la Salle said his daily mass, at which his community assisted, in the chapel belonging to the Dominican Nuns. The Nuns, struck by the sanctity of his demeanour and by the fervor with which he offered up the holy sacrifice, inquired his name and history, and soon interested themselves warmly in the welfare of his community. On hearing of the difficulties and the persecutions from which he had suffered, they strove, by their constant charity, to make him forget his past trials. For many years, they laid aside part of what

they possessed for the benefit of the Brothers, and even the departure of the latter made no change in their friendship. When Blessed de la Salle went to Rouen, the alms of his benefactresses followed him; when, in 1709, the famine drove him back to Paris, he found them ever ready to assist him; their house was his constant resource; in moments of great want and distress, he would say cheerfully to the Brothers: "Let us go to 'la Croix;'" and he was never known to return thence empty handed.

On his side, he was able to render some services to the Nuns, several of whom, impressed by his sanctity, wished to place themselves under his spiritual direction. He resisted for some time, pleading his occupations and also his dislike to hearing the confessions of women, who generally found him a severe director; but at length he yielded, and his benefactresses were thus able to appreciate still more fully his deep knowledge of spiritual life, and the solidity of his piety.

He remained in the Rue de Charonne about a year and a half, during which time the Brothers of the other schools of the order in Paris used to come, according to their custom, and spend Sundays and holidays with the community.

In spite of his deep humility, the renown of Blessed de la Salle soon spread afar, beyond the limits of his parish. On one occasion the Governor of the Bastille sent to request him to hear the confession of a priest who was imprisoned for a crime against the State. He immediately obeyed, and found the unhappy captive in a miserable condition, forgotten by all and clad in tattered garments, filled with vermin. Moved to tears of compassion, the servant of God lovingly clasped the prisoner in his arms, heard his confession, and reconciled him with his Redeemer. Then, he made him take off his soiled and ragged clothes, and put on his own in exchange, while he joyfully wrapped himself in his penitent's miserable rags, which he concealed under his large cloak. When he left the prison, his soul was full of joy at having relieved the representative of Him who has said: "I was naked, and you clothed me; I was a captive, and you visited me."

In spite of his change of abode, the persecutions from which Blessed de la Salle had previously suffered, were, by God's permission, to follow him to the faubourg Saint Antoine. All the good works that had been founded in Rue de Vaugirard had been remov-

ed to the Rue de Charonne. There the novitiate was installed; there new schools were opened; there also a new Sunday-school was established. Again it was this school that served as a pretext for fresh attacks on the part of the writing-masters.

We have already related how, on his arrival in Paris in 1688, Blessed de la Salle had found himself in presence of two powerful communities who, after having for many years been at variance with each other, had at last come to divide the monopoly of public teaching— the school-masters and the writing-masters. At first the new foundation escaped observation; but as it grew and developed, it excited the jealousy of the school-masters, who, in 1688 and in 1699, obliged the servant of God to appear before the precentor, in order to justify himself. However their accusations fell to the ground as he proved successfully that the schools he had founded were simply and solely poor schools; moreover he was supported by the pastor of Saint Sulpice, whose powerful influence succeeded in defeating the efforts of his persecutors.

In 1703, when Blessed de la Salle removed to the faubourg Saint Antoine, the situation changed, and the proceedings against him were conducted with more policy and on a different system. The school-masters on the one hand, and the writing-masters on the other, forgetting their past differences, made common cause against the new Institute, and while the first summoned the servant of God to appear before the precentor, the second denounced him to the Lieutenant of police; thus he, who had a horror of litigation, found himself summoned before two tribunals, each of which possessed sufficient authority to destroy his work.

On the 7th of February 1704, while the Brothers were employed in teaching, two commissaries, accompanied by a sergeant, presented themselves at the house, and exhibited a written order of the Lieutenant of police, authorizing them to seize all the writing materials of the schools. In consequence, pens, paper, inkstands, the children's copy-books and even the sign placed over the entrance, were seized and left under the care of the Brothers themselves, to whom the sergeant gave strict orders not to touch any of the confiscated articles, and to whom he left a written paper ordering them to appear before the police court, in order to hear the sentence that condemned them to the confiscation of their furniture and also to a fine.

The Brothers were alarmed at these violent measures, but their founder continued his daily occupations as though nothing had occurred; the schools remained open, the children continued to receive instruction, and he would not even reply to the accusations brought forward against him.

The Lieutenant of police condemned him by default ¹ to a fine of fifty francs and to the costs, and he was forbidden to receive any children whose parents were not of the poorest, or to give them any instruction above their condition.

He was condemned at the same time by the precentor to close his schools and pay fifty francs fine, and all the furniture was seized. The sentence of the precentor was only eight days anterior to that of the writing-masters. The two were evidently the result of a concerted attack. The servant of God was to be hunted down, condemned by all the tribunals, driven from every shelter, declared incapable of teaching altogether, and forced to give up his undertaking.

Blessed de la Salle was not more disturbed by the condemnation than he had been by the action against him. It is not on record whether or not he paid the fine; but the school was kept open. This, however, was only the beginning of his trials.

Other law-suits were at once instituted against him, and his enemies did not lay down their arms. But the servant of God was well equipped for fighting the good fight, and he fought on. His will was of iron, and his heart was of gold. As yet, the attacks had only been directed against the schools of the Rue de Charonne; but those of the faubourg Saint Marcel and Saint Sulpice were simultaneously threatened.

The entire life of Blessed de la Salle is, in truth, worthy of the deepest admiration. During the first centuries of the Church, we see the martyrs go down into the arena, and bare their breasts to the wild beasts, while they uttered that glorious death-cry that has resounded through the ages— "I am a Christian!" Perhaps, in the eyes of God, who sees the secret of hearts, M. de la Salle's virtues shone with as bright a lustre, though they were less dramatically manifested in the sight of men. To open schools in order to secure the salvation of thousands of Christian children, to

¹ Archives nationales, Y. 9413.

be compelled to close them, and finally to triumph after the hardest and most prosaic trials— such was the life of the servant of God. May we not dare to say that it was in one sense as glorious as that of the martyrs?

In vain did the Brothers appel against the last sentence given against their schools in the faubourg Saint Marcel and Saint Sulpice. The whole community was attacked, and Blessed de la Salle with it was condemned without appeal. The sentence was placarded in the public places throughout Paris; bailiffs, with hammers and ladders, arrived at the Rue de Charonne; the inscription over the door— “ BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS”— was taken down; the benches, tables and books were seized; and, after six years of existence, even the Sunday-school was destroyed by the animosity of the writing-masters. Secular education had inaugurated its exploits. The servant of God at first took refuge in the parish of Saint Roch, where he assembled his novices, and tried to open a new school. He wandered from parish to parish, seeking some spot where he might place his work under shelter from the storm, but all in vain. The Saint Roch school did not last. It answered, however, as a temporary refuge where he was enabled to gather round him the remnants of his dispersed community, while he was looking out for a more stable asylum.

But the hardest trial, the sharpest grief was yet in store for him. And it was to come from the Parliament, the Parliament to which the servant of God looked as to his last hope! On the 5th of February 1706, the terrible decree went forth : he was forbidden, he or any of the Brothers, to keep a single primary school in Paris or the Faubourgs, without the formal permission of the precentor. All seemed lost.

The holy man was pursued wherever he turned. The precentor condemned him, the Lieutenant of police condemned him, and Parliament confirmed the sentence; men who had till now been implacable enemies, grew reconciled in order to attack him, as formerly Herod and Pilate joined hands against Our Lord. He looked round him in vain for a friend, a protector, a powerful and upright judge. Paris, to whose education he had devoted himself, Paris coalesced to persecute him for the good he had been doing there. After fifteen years of futile efforts, he was forced to remove the centre of his Institute elsewhere.

But, in truth, it was already done. Providence was taking good care of a work that was to do such good service. The novitiate was no longer in Paris; it had been moved to Rouen six months before. But if the novitiate and the mother-house were gone, the schools remained, and they were to bear the brunt of the onset of all these triumphant adversaries. Their rage was directed above all against the schools of Saint Sulpice. It is true, these only existed as charity schools, and as such the parish-priest had a right to keep them and defend them, but his favourable sentiments towards Blessed de la Salle had undergone a change, and, taking advantage of this, the writing-masters continued to pursue the Brothers with endless vexations and threats of new fines and law-suits.

On hearing of these continual persecutions, the Holy Founder, who had removed to Rouen, returned to Paris to his former abode in the parish of Saint Roch. In addition to his mental trials and anxieties, he was just then suffering from a frightful tumour on one of his knees. An operation had been unsuccessfully performed in Rouen, and a fresh one became necessary on his return to Paris. In the midst of the most severe suffering, his courage never failed, and he continued to recite his office with perfect calmness throughout the whole of the operation; suffering had become so familiar to him, that the most agonizing pain had not the power to bring from him a word of complaint.

Meantime, the persecution against his Institute continued. The parish-priest of Saint Sulpice, far from defending the charity schools, which were placed as such under his authority, had, on the contrary, closed that situated in the Rue des Fossés-Monsieur-le-Prince, hoping thereby to disarm the animosity of the writing-masters. This concession only rendered them bolder and more over-bearing in their demands.

At last, the persecution became so fierce that Blessed de la Salle was obliged to allow the Brothers to leave the schools. One morning, therefore, the pupils, arriving at their usual hour, found the doors closed; at first they fancied this meant a holiday, but as time went on, and the Brothers did not reappear, the parents became anxious and went to seek the parish-priest, to whom they represented that they were not rich enough to send their children to the paying schools, and that if the charity schools remained closed,

their children must be deprived of any kind of instruction. M. de la Chétardie fully entered into their views, but he dared not oblige the Brothers to reopen their schools in the midst of the intrigues and persecutions directed against them by the writing-masters. He, therefore, sent for the latter and after having explained to them that it was he who had invited the Brothers to his parish and who had entrusted his schools to their direction, he added that he was resolved to maintain them at their post, as he had a right to do. Two notaries, who were present at the interview, drew up an official document, in which this declaration was embodied, and gave it to Blessed de la Salle that he might use it if further attacks were made against his Institute.

After three weeks' interruption, the schools were reopened, but their holy founder was destined to suffer fresh anxieties on their behalf. The times happened to be unusually hard; the Brothers had no personal resources, and the parish-priest of Saint Sulpice paid them their allowance in notes upon the State, which just then were at a very low value, and could not be changed without considerable loss. Very soon Blessed de la Salle came to an end of the small sum thus allowed him, and in his distress he went to the parish-priest, who received him harshly, and declined to give him anything. This last trial seemed almost more than he could bear, and, in his discouragement and sadness, he reproached himself bitterly with having brought these sufferings upon his Brothers, who were personally loved and esteemed, and whose work was popular. It was his presence, he thought, that drew down these humiliations and trials on his disciples.

He turned to God as his only refuge, and went to make a retreat in the convent of the Carmelite Monks. He spent fifteen days there in prayer and solitude, and seeking in the Divine presence the strength he needed to carry on the fight, and to maintain his courage under the sufferings he had to undergo. Meantime, one of the Brothers, who was a favorite with M. de la Chétardie, went to see him, and described to him in such moving terms the true condition of the community that the pastor's heart was melted, and immediately he gave abundantly what was needed for the wants of the school; thus were the prayers of the holy founder heard, and the trial of famine spared him. But other trials now arose. No sooner had he come out of his retreat than persecution began

afresh. We can hardly be surprised if the Brothers began to lose heart. They were not heroic enough to keep on battling against adversity as their saintly founder did. He did what he thought best for them; he called them from all the schools in the parish, and disseminated them throughout the different houses of the Institute.

The schools were thus closed, the Director of each house alone remained to explain to all enquirers the cause of this break up. The parish-priest of Saint Sulpice, wishing to save the schools from destruction, tried to find other masters, and having failed, implored the Brothers to return. Their founder was too gentle and forgiving to refuse his consent; they therefore returned to Saint Sulpice; ten were appointed to teach in the schools, one was to take charge of the temporal administration of the house, and another of its general government. Early in October, after the schools had reopened, M. de la Chétardie sent his curate, M. Languet de Gergy, with directions to take down the names, ages and abode of each pupil, and the condition of their parents. It was decided, moreover, that the Brothers could not receive a pupil unless he brought a ticket of admission given to him by the parish authorities. The school-masters had no further excuse for interference, and the Brothers resumed their labors in peace.



Blessed de la Salle visiting the Schools.

CHAPTER IX.

SCHOOLS IN THE PROVINCES (1699-1703).

WHILE Blessed de la Salle was being persecuted by all the powers of this world; while his benefactors were forsaking him, and the school-masters and the writing-masters were coalescing to shut up his schools; while Parliament was condemning him not to teach; while his own sons were rebelling against him, his work was spreading all over France, and schools were being opened in town after town. It seemed as if every blow struck at the heart of the man of God was like the wound made by the plough-share in the bosom of the earth before the seed, which is to be one day its wealth, is dropped into it. The number of his foundations might be reckoned by the number of his sorrows.

In 1699, the school-masters took an action against him; the same year, he founded the school of Chartres. The next year he founded one at Calais; and at Rheims, where he gave all his goods to the poor, he bought in a house which would seem to be the first held by the Institute as its own property.

The years 1702 and 1703 witnessed his long conflict with the Archbishop; they also saw the foundation of the schools at Troyes and Avignon. Whilst in Paris he is stripped of his title of Superior, the Archbishop of Avignon calls the Brothers to his diocese,

and the spectacle of their virtue, during three and twenty years, draws from the prelate a testimony which is to contribute afterwards to the recognition of the Institute by the Holy See. In this same year, Blessed de la Salle, accused of inclining towards heresy, sends the safest and oldest of his disciples to Rome, consenting to be deprived of his services for the rest of his life in order to have a living link between the Holy See and the Institute, a faithful representative who may at all times testify to his obedience and his faith, and place under the eyes of the Sovereign Pontiff the model of those schools that he wished only to open with his blessing.

The years 1704, 1705 and 1706 saw the persecution of the school-masters and the writing-masters; the Institute, shaken to its centre, seemed on the point of perishing. Meantime, schools are being founded at Marseilles, and the vexations that the servant of God has to endure in Paris compel him to fly to Rouen, where the mother-house takes a development that it never could have reached in Paris.

In 1706, the law-suits end in a hostile decree of the Parliament. The next year a new efflorescence of foundations bursts out in the southern provinces. Schools are opened at Mende, at Alais, at Valréas, at Grenoble.

What was the mysterious chain that linked these triumphs to these trials, and in what scales were the tears and heart-aches of the founder weighed to be accounted worth such abundant blessings upon his work?

These are mysteries which the eye of man can recognize, but into which it may not penetrate.

The Bishop of Chartres was the first prelate who invited the Brothers to come to his episcopal city. His predecessors had always shown great zeal for education. A synodal constitution of the year 1555 had laid down that "every parish was to have a public school to instruct the children, unless there was a priest or a cleric there sufficiently well informed to teach them familiarly the first letters, and to explain the Lord's prayer, the Creed and other things contained in the Alphabet." The parish-priests were charged to provide all that was necessary to these schools, which were kept up by the parishioners. It was they who named the masters. They were bound to visit the school once or twice a year, question the children and examine the books.

The clergy of the town of Chartres had taken these duties to heart. There were already school-mistresses for girls in the parishes of the city. The pastors were eager to have a similar establishment for boys, and they petitioned their Bishop to this effect. This document deserves to be reproduced, for it attests eloquently the zeal displayed by the clergy for the education of youth. "After having several times conferred together," said the parish-priests, "we are agreed that one of the chief causes of the indocility, the immodesty, the ignorance and visible immorality of the children of the town is owing to there being no free schools for the poor; or else because the masters and mistresses who have hitherto taught the poor, almost without any leave or knowledge of superiors, only doing it as a means of gaining their bread, have not acquitted themselves as they should for the advantage of the children, either from incapacity or want of zeal and application; that it becomes needful now to take serious steps to remedy this great evil, so that there may be in the city some few school-masters and mistresses—under your gracious orders— of whose capacity, piety and zeal there can be no doubt, and to whom we may entrust the care of youth; and above all, that there may be some free schools for the children of the poor, who for want of being able to pay masters, being neither taught nor kept at school, but wandering about and idling, become easily corrupted and grow incorrigible. With this idea, and having heard that there is in Paris a priest of great piety who educates and trains for this office young men who have all the qualities necessary for filling it worthily, and that he gives them wherever they are asked for, provided their maintenance be secured, for which a very modest sum is sufficient, we felt it an obligation to have recourse to your lordship to entreat you to use your influence, and even your alms, in order to procure for this town so powerful a help towards the reformation of the ills of the people."

The Bishop of Chartres was then M^r Godet des Marais, who had known Blessed de la Salle at the seminary of Saint Sulpice, where he had himself been educated. Since that time, he had followed with interest the rise and growth of the Institute. Greatly preoccupied concerning the Christian education of youth, he had written as early as the year 1694 to beg the servant of God to give him some Brothers. But having only a small number then, the latter could not comply with his request. The Bishop had repeated it several

times at intervals, and in 1699, urged by the parish-priests, he wrote again, and more pressingly. Blessed de la Salle would not come to any decision without consulting the Brothers. He acquainted them with the desire of M^r Godet des Marais, and enlarged upon his zeal. They were of opinion that it would not be right to reject such an opportunity of doing good, and all volunteered to accept the mission. Blessed de la Salle selected from their number six of the most intelligent and zealous; he added a seventh Brother for the material service of the house, and the little colony went forth, as a swarm of bees takes flight from an overcrowded hive to build a new hive somewhere else.

The Bishop of Chartres took charge of all the expenses. But it was not enough to have masters, and to open schools, it was necessary to fill them and for this end to induce the parents to send their children there. The prelate, accordingly, on the 4th of October, issued a Pastoral letter instructing the parents on their duties, and announcing the opening of the schools for the 12th of the month. They were opened, and the children arrived in great numbers.

As long as M^r Godet des Marais lived, he felt the most tender solicitude for the Brothers of the Christian schools; he visited them frequently, made himself acquainted with their wants, provided for them, and was careful, above all, to moderate their ardor and austerity. "If you will not fatten the victim the better to immolate it, you ought at least to feed it and not overburden it with work and with an excessive load of austerities." In order to put this precept in practice, the worthy Bishop used to search for the instruments of penance made use of by the Brothers, and confiscate them.

He had no less esteem and affection for Blessed de la Salle, and when the latter came to Chartres to see the Brothers, he received him with all honor, and gave him pressing invitations to his table. Blessed de la Salle declined them with such persistent humility, that one day, determined to overcome him, the Bishop had the doors of the palace locked, and so kept him a prisoner. The holy man, finding he could not get out, submitted with a good grace, and went in to dinner. Amongst the guests were M. d'Aubigné, Vicar general, afterwards Bishop of Noyon, and finally Archbishop of Rouen. After dinner, the Bishop and his Vicar attacked Blessed de la Salle about the severity of his Rule and the extreme poverty of his clothes. They criticized his thick shoes, his broad hat and

his patched cloak. He defended himself with his wonted simplicity, and gave the reasons which had led him to frame the Rule as it stood. The shabbiness of his clothes was such, however, that the Bishop made him a present of a cloak, and to leave him no pretext for not accepting it, he had it made of the coarsest and commonest stuff. M. de la Salle took the gift humbly as an alms, and wore it; but not long after, as he was coming home one winter's night, he was accosted by robbers who took a fancy to the cloak, and he let them have it.

The schools of Chartres had prospered rapidly. The aspect and example of the Brothers, their gentleness, their devotedness, impressed the children, and disposed them to receive their lessons.

Blessed de la Salle needed, nevertheless, great perseverance and strength of soul to preserve the Rule intact amidst all the contradictions that assailed it. Wherever he presented it, he was met by particular views and traditions and prejudices. Thus the Bishop of Chartres did not at all approve of his teaching the children to read French before Latin. Latin was no longer the general language, as formerly, but it was still the language of educated people, and those who were entering on their studies, began by learning to read it. French came afterwards, as if it had been a dialect without a literature that was not worth while making a study of.

Blessed de la Salle held to his opinion. He showed that times were changed, that French was now the language universally spoken, necessary, and easy to learn. It was very easy to go on from French to Latin, whereas it was difficult to begin with the latter, whose hard words were so much more unintelligible to children. If, as it often happened, the school studies were cut short before the time, those who had learned French at least carried away with them a little stock of knowledge, whereas, if they had only learned to read Latin without understanding it, and without having learned to read French, they had wasted their time. M^r Godet des Marais yielded to these arguments.

Poor, dear house of Chartres! God tried it severely. The Brothers suffered want and hunger there more than once. In 1705, an epidemic carried off a great many of them. They stayed at their post and fell, making no display, modestly heroic. And at Chartres, as in Paris, they had the plague of law-suits, that other epidemic. But, through God's grace, Blessed de la Salle and his Brothers came

triumphantly out of them, and, in the long run, the Chartres foundation prospered.

The establishment of Calais was only a few months behind that of Chartres. Towards the end of 1699, a young ecclesiastic who was studying theology at the seminary of Bons-Enfants, M. Ponthon, nephew of the former Dean of Calais, saw one day the children of the Christian schools assisting at mass in the church of Saint Sulpice. He was struck by their recollection and their discipline, and enquired at once who were the masters that brought them up so well. As soon as he came to know the Brothers, he conceived a lively desire to endow his native town with one of their schools. He was about to succeed to the position of parish-priest of Calais on the resignation of his uncle, and he already held his future parish in affection. He wrote to his uncle about the school, and the latter bade him go and see Blessed de la Salle, and ask him for Brothers, promising to do all in his power to assist them in organizing the establishment.

The aldermen of the city, religious men, eager for the Christian education of youth, approved of the scheme. They wrote to M. de Béthune, governor of Calais, to obtain his consent. The latter, sincerely pious, and already well informed on the subject from an interview he had with Blessed de la Salle, not only consented to the foundation, but gave the Brothers a letter signed by himself and sealed with his arms, recommending them to the town in the warmest terms. M. Bignon, vice-governor of Picardy and Artois, declared himself their protector. Finally, the Bishop of Boulogne, M^r Pierre de l'Angle, granted the necessary authorization.

Blessed de la Salle, yielding to all these advances, sent two Brothers, whose first act was to throw themselves at the feet of the Bishop, and ask his permission to teach Christian doctrine. The prelate granted the permission, and wrote a Pastoral, inviting the inhabitants of Calais to send their children to the schools.

The school opened, therefore, under the most favorable conditions. Priests and laymen vied with one another in supporting it. Thanks to M. Ponthon, it was even favored by gifts from the King, in 1701 and 1702.

The success of this foundation inspired several persons with the desire of making another one. There was a quarter at Calais called Court-Gain, quite isolated, and inhabited only by sailors—an honest population with a strong sense of religion at heart, but steeped in ignorance. The children from their tenderest age went out to sea, and fished, and no one troubled to teach them anything.

A zealous ecclesiastic, M. Leprince, who was chaplain of the district, wished very much to have a school there; but for this there wanted the ground, a house, Brothers, and funds to support them. Charity compassed all these wants.

The aldermen of the city, together with the parish-priest, wrote to M. de Pontchartrain for the concession of a square situated in Court-Gain, where there was a guard-house. They obtained it. The chancellor himself wrote to the Dean on the 4th of May 1703—“ I explained to M. Bignon the intentions of His Majesty regarding the Brothers of the Christian schools for the instruction of the children of the sailors at Court-Gain. You have only to apply to him; he will provide all they want.” Blessed de la Salle hastened to despatch two Brothers. The King granted them an annual pension of one hundred and fifty francs, afterwards increased to three hundred, and which was paid until his death.

The success of the sailors' school was no less complete than that of the children of the town. Blessed de la Salle's name was in veneration there. He went to this school for the first time in 1716, and was received with great honor by a pious layman, M. Gence, who took advantage of having him at table to get his portrait taken unknown to him, the painter being hidden behind the tapestry. On discovering the trick, the holy man's humility was deeply wounded.

M. Gence had a large fortune. He had never married, and placed all his means at the service of religion. He labored, above all, at the conversion of Protestants; but he had a great zeal also for the work of the Brothers. “ You are husbandmen in the field of the father of the family,” he would say to them, “ and if you were not called in at first to work there, you are at last called to clear away the most neglected part. You are gleaners who follow in the track of the reapers, to pick up here and there the ears that were strewn about, forgotten and trampled under foot. If you do not go up to the altar, or ascend into the pulpit, if you do not enter

the confessional or the baptistry; if your functions do not put the thurible into your hand to offer incense to the Most High in His temple, you have at least the honor of preparing for Him living temples, and of laboring for the sanctification of neglected and forsaken youth. You fill the office of the Apostles, who gladly laid aside every other employment of their ministry to give themselves up individually to prayer and the preaching of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. ”

Noble words, and well worthy of being quoted alongside of so many others in praise of the pious laymen of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. M. Charles de Ribbe found nothing finer in his “ books of reason. ” This is saying a great deal in a few words.

The Troyes school dates from 1703. Nuns had long been entrusted in this town with the education of girls, and the clergy took charge of that of the boys. Before 1703 there were free schools for both sexes in all the parishes; but here, as elsewhere, the great difficulty was to find proper masters.

In 1702, a pious lady bequeathed to the parish-priest of Saint Nizier, M. le Bey, an annuity of two hundred francs to establish a charity school. The latter at once bethought him of the Brothers, and begged Blessed de la Salle to send him some. An annuity of two hundred francs was not enough for two, if their board and lodging was to be paid for out of it. The holy man entreated the parish-priest, who resided at the little seminary, of which he was superior, to give them up his presbytery. The parish-priest consented, and the contract was at once drawn up. The Brothers arrived in 1703, and immediately opened the school. For seven years they remained at the presbytery, and subsisted on two hundred francs a year, as their sole income.

In 1710, the successor of M. le Bey could not let them keep on in the presbytery, and they had to look out for another house. Their small allowance now became quite insufficient; but they were loved, and many persons came to their assistance. The Bishop, M. Bouthillier de Chavigny, had taken them under his wing, and was full of zeal for the schools; he could not fail to love the disciples of Blessed de la Salle.

In 1703, the Institute took root in Languedoc and Provence. It was the moment when the persecution against the holy founder was at its height in Paris. Providence, while striking him with one hand, consoled him with the other, and trials were the instruments that fashioned his future prosperity. For him, as formerly for the Apostles, persecution, while scattering his flock and compelling him to fly, led him at the same time to carry the seed of his Institute with him wherever he went, and, in wandering from town to town, he planted schools.

In the year 1702, M. Jean Pierre de Madon, lord of Château-Blanc, treasurer of the Pope at Avignon, wished to found a charity school in that town. His wife in dying bequeathed to him six thousand francs for this purpose, but he knew not how to carry out her pious intention. Here, as everywhere, masters were wanting. He was searching for some on all sides, when a gentleman from Lyons told him of Blessed de la Salle's Institute. M. de Château-Blanc wrote at once to ask him for two Brothers.

The holy man hesitated. He feared that his children, removed far from him into a country surrounded by heretics, might lose the love of their Rule, and be influenced by the seductive atmosphere of error. While he was hesitating, one of the Brothers whom he had sent to Rome returned, and was passing by Avignon. M. de Château-Blanc heard of this, and intercepted him, and was so charmed with him that he wrote again to Blessed de la Salle, and with such earnestness that there was no resisting the appeal any longer.

M. de la Salle sent two Brothers. M. de Château-Blanc lodged them while their own house was being prepared, and added to the sum already given to them, so that they might be in want of nothing. The first thing the Brothers did on arriving was, as usual, to throw themselves at the feet of the Archbishop, M^r Maurice de Gontery, to ask his authorization and his blessing. The Archbishop received them with the greatest kindness, granted them all they desired, and the school was opened in 1703.

It was soon so flourishing that the two Brothers were not enough. M. de Château-Blanc wrote to Blessed de la Salle in 1705 to ask him for another. The town, he said, was greatly edified by his disciples, and the vice-legatè was so pleased with them that he showed it at every opportunity. But their number must be augmented. God

would provide for their wants : “ I have no doubt but that He will, for this work of charity is the most needed of any in our town. I hope, sir, that you will come and judge for yourself, and that we shall have the happiness of seeing you. ”

The new Brothers were sent. The vice-legate, by order of Pope Clement XI., and the Archbishop, undertook to support them. The latter prelate took the liveliest interest in the schools; he went frequently to visit them, passed whole hours there, assisting at the classes and questioning the children, stimulating their emulation, sending for them to his palace, and hearing them recite their catechism.

The Avignon Brothers kept two schools : “ one for the larger and more advanced boys, where they learned to read, write and cypher, and one for the smaller and more backward children, who only learned to read. Every day they went to mass, and the Brothers explained Christian doctrine to them; on Sundays and holidays, they took them to high mass and vespers in the parish, and gave them further lessons in catechism.

The schools were established in a house bought by M. de Château-Blanc, in the parish of Saint Pierre, in the quarter of Puits-de-la-Reine. They were very far from the Rhône, near which a great many artisans lived. Another school was, therefore, founded by and by in this new quarter, with the assistance of the town and the Sovereign Pontiff.

The Holy See, kept informed by the Archbishop, was in sympathy with the Brothers. The Archbishop gave them, in 1720, a certificate stating that “ since they had been settled in the town, they had always filled their office with great zeal and assiduity; that the public were greatly benefitted by their efforts to bring up the children in a Christian way, and that their modesty and the purity of their lives had always been a source of edification. ”

This testimony contributed powerfully to the recognition of the Institute by the Holy See.

We cannot speak of the schools in the provinces without coming back to Rheims, which had been their cradle. After the departure of Blessed de la Salle, the seminary for the country school-masters

had been dispersed, and the little seminary had been brought back to Paris; but the schools remained, and the ill-will manifested towards them at first had given way to more just sentiments. The relatives, the former brethren, the friends of M. de la Salle became interested in his work, and lent their assistance to establish it on a solid basis.

On the 11th of August 1700, Blessed de la Salle, conjointly with his Brother Louis, M. Claude Pepin, canon of the cathedral, and another priest, M. de la Val, purchased a house where the Brothers kept a school and which is situated at the entrance of Rue Neuve, opposite the convent of Saint Claire. This purchase cost them nine hundred and fifty francs. The following year they bought two more houses next to this one, and drew up a deed to explain their intentions. It was agreed that these houses should be purchased to lodge the Brothers and keep their schools, without their heirs being able to make any claim on them. In the event of the death of one of them, the survivors were to choose a partner who would become co-proprietor with them. Even the event of the Brothers giving up their work was foreseen, and, in that case, the property was to pass to the country school-mistresses of the free schools.

This arrangement lasted for long years, even after the death of Blessed de la Salle. The co-proprietors died off one after another, but the survivors always provided successors to them, and, in 1725, one of his nephews and heirs, Pierre de la Salle, named two other canons to be co-proprietors with him of the houses that belonged to the schools.

Such a success was in a measure the result of Christian prudence, but far more and above all of God's blessing.



Blessed de la Salle sending two Brothers to Rome to open a school there.

CHAPTER X.

THE SCHOOL IN ROME.

BLESSED de la Salle wished to have a school near the Holy See, in order that the Sovereign Pontiff might judge of his work, bless it if he found it good, and grant him right of citizenship in the Church. Modest as were his resources, few as were his disciples, he nevertheless decided on sending two of them to Rome, and he chose for the carrying out of this mission Gabriel Drolin, one of the two who took the vow of stability with him in 1691. To Gabriel he joined his brother Gerard Drolin.

The two new missionaries set out in 1700. Brother Gerard fell ill, and was obliged to return to France the following year; Brother Gabriel Drolin continued to pursue his mission in Rome. He remained there more than a quarter of a century, far from his spiritual father, from his community, exposed to all sorts of temptations, but pursuing faithfully the mission he had received, which was to obtain the papal approbation for his Institute.

Things did not go smoothly, and Brother Drolin encountered many difficulties, some coming from persons, some from the customs of the country, others, finally, from want of means. Months

went by before it was possible to establish anything, and Blessed de la Salle kept writing him letter after letter to stir up his zeal and support his courage:— “ Pray constantly that God may do with you as He pleases. You must be wholly abandoned to His guidance and to His holy will, and you must do nothing without His counsel.” Brother Drolin and the Institute were both so poor that he was informed one day as a piece of good news that a pious lady had promised to buy him a habit.

In spite of the expedients to which he was driven, Brother Drolin did not lose sight of the foundation of a school, and M. de la Salle never ceased urging him about it. He succeeded at last. A Christian family gave him his meals out of charity; but he did not live in their house, and he spent his days teaching. Blessed de la Salle congratulates him, and offers to send him books; but one sees in his letters that the spirit of prudence keeps constantly restraining him:— “ I don't wish to go forward in anything; and I will not go forward in Rome more than anywhere else; Providence must take the first step, and I shall be content when I see that I am acting under His dictates. I shall then have nothing to reproach myself with, whereas, when I undertake a thing, it is always I, and I never expect much good to come of that, unless God gives it a large blessing.”

However, the Roman school was founded, and Brother Drolin had informed Blessed de la Salle of the event. It held on for several years, poor, but still flourishing. In 1706, it was approved, and on the 12th of May of that year, Blessed de la Salle begged Brother Drolin to let him know the exact date of the patents. It had taken four years of efforts and entreaties to obtain them. Meantime, the school prospered. The children were numerous, and Blessed de la Salle was happy about it.

Brother Drolin was overladen with work. He was alone to keep this large school, to represent the Brothers in Rome, and to make known the Institute to high ecclesiastical personages. Under this burden his health broke down, and he fell very ill. It was to be feared also that his love for the interior life might grow cold from lack of time to devote himself to prayer. M. de la Salle reminds him of this¹:— “ It is about eight days since I received your letter,

¹ Letter, April 1st 1705.

my very dear Brother; I was greatly distressed about your illness, and I rejoice that God has restored you to health. I also have been very ill this last week, not being able to walk; but I am now much better. I was much surprised not to have news of you, and this troubled me. What I mean to do is to send you a Brother by the end of this summer, for I want badly to let you have more rest, and more time to apply yourself to meditation. Yet I don't know what there is to prevent your doing this. Pray Our Lord to bless His work."

The intention of sending another Brother to Rome was not carried out, either for want of the money, or for want of the Brother. M. de la Salle did all he could, meantime, to cheer and sustain Brother Drolin: he kept him informed of all that passed in the community; he asked him for his prayers, and assured him of his, and did his best to prevent loneliness and distance making the absent one feel that he was outside the family circle.

Brother Drolin's trials were manifold. Money above all was wanting, and it seems that, in order not to starve, Brother Drolin had to go into a private house, probably the one where he had first received hospitality. Blessed de la Salle was uneasy at this, and, in 1708, he writes to him: "Tell me if you are in the same place, and if you are not on the look-out for something else. I pray Our Lord to fill you full of His spirit, and to do with you as it pleases Him."

Such persevering prayer could not remain sterile. Brother Drolin ended by obtaining a school from the Pope, and, in order to manage it, he left M. de la Bussière's house, on which Blessed de la Salle joyfully congratulates him: "This is what I sighed for. I know there is work to be done where you are now, and I rejoice that you have a good number of scholars." And the holy man blesses God.

Brother Drolin, sustained by the advice of his absent father, was enabled to stand firm in his duty, and faithful to his Rule, and to live for eight and twenty years away from his community without faltering in his vocation. A great number of the letters written to him by Blessed de la Salle are lost; but those that remain are sufficient to enable us to appreciate the spirit that breathed from all.

Those written towards the end bear especially the stamp of an

unbounded confidence : “ It was not my will that has kept me so long without writing to you,” he writes in 1716 : “ I assure you I have a very tender affection for you, and I often pray to God for you. ”

Brother Drolin never again saw Blessed de la Salle in this life. He remained in Rome till 1728, and only returned to France seven years after his holy protector had gone to his rest in the Lord. He remained for a quarter of a century the representative of his community in Rome; the Sovereign Pontiff judged of the master by the disciple, and of the entire work by that little school which excited the admiration of the Romans themselves, accustomed as they are to the marvellous achievements of sanctity and genius.

Brother Drolin died in 1733, in the community of Auxonne, in the diocese of Besançon.





Blessed de la Salle writing his Rule.

CHAPTER XI.

WORK IN ROUEN (1705)

IN 1705, Blessed de la Salle was called to Rouen. The education of children had not been so neglected in this town as in many others. Normandy was one of the most advanced provinces of France, and the town of Rouen, in particular, contained a number of charitable persons who were striving actively to procure for the poor the benefits of Christian instruction.

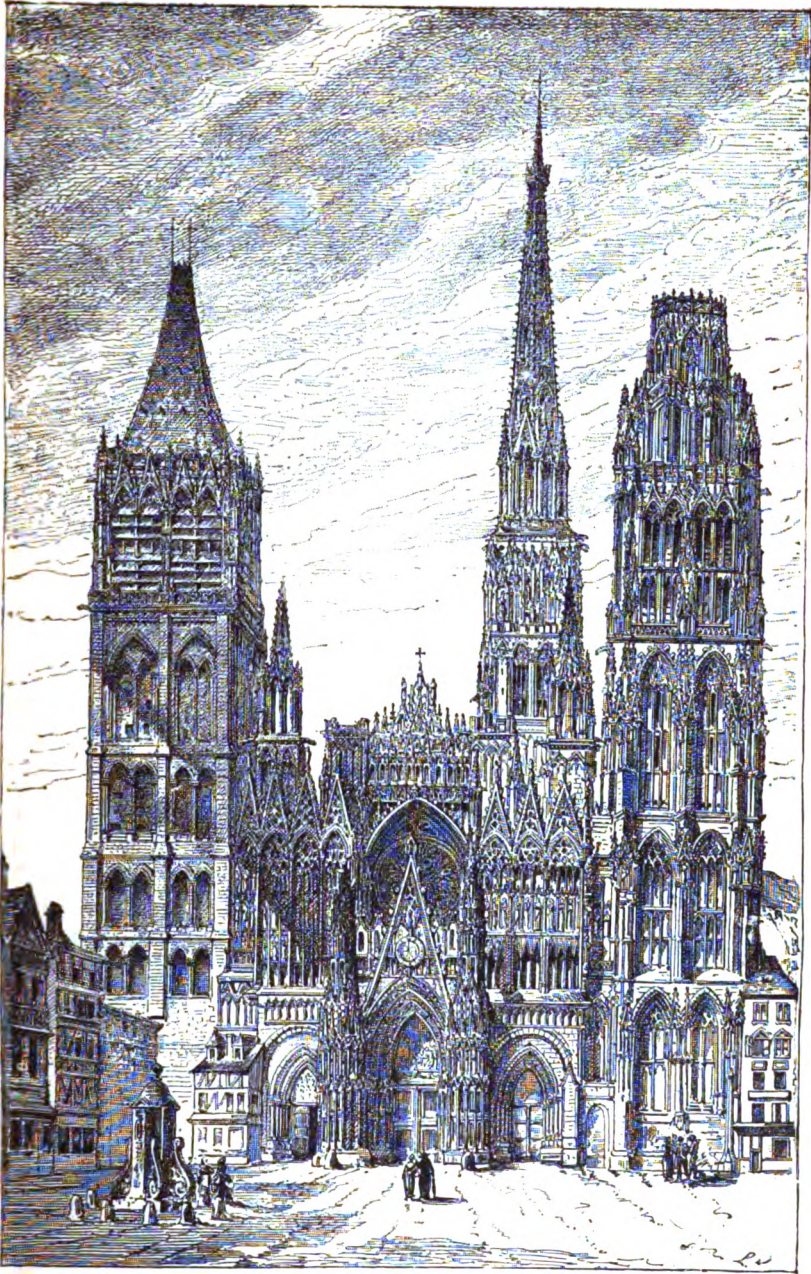
There was in Rouen a very ancient charitable administration called Office of the poor who were not sick, "*les pauvres valides.*" It was a committee composed of members of the magistracy, the clergy and the municipality, who met every week to consult about the wants of the poor, like our Offices of relief. Their funds were collected from voluntary contributions of the town's people, fines, collections in the churches, gifts and legacies. They distributed alms to the poor on certain days, put children out to nurse, and performed miracles of energy in fighting against misery and alleviating it. Towards the middle of the seventeenth century, this committee changed its character, and turned into something like our hospital committees of the present day. Men of good will, be-

longing to the best families in the town, gave up every other occupation, and took up their abode in the general hospital, in the midst of the poor, in order to minister to them. Such were at this period the two brothers Bimorel, one of whom was the treasurer of France, and the other canon of the Metropolitan Church and councillor of Parliament.

The Office had not overlooked the education of poor children. As early as 1555, it had purchased, in different quarters of the towns, four houses where four priests were to teach poor children “to fear and praise God, the Creed and the Commandments of the law, their little book, reading, writing, and above all good behaviour.” The four masters charged with this mission were lodged, and received each fifty francs salary. Charitable persons had provided funds for the maintenance of these schools. They held on more or less satisfactorily for a century. Their number diminished, however, and towards the year 1655 there was only one left. Just at this date the Office turned the schools into a sort of refuge where poor children, boys and girls, from the age of eight, were taken in and formed to piety, and taught to read and write, and were employed in divers kinds of works and trades. A school similar to that of the general hospital was founded at the same time. Two priests were charged with the Christian instruction, and a writing-master came, at a salary of fifty-four francs, to teach reading and arithmetic.

The number of children taken in and taught in this way was necessarily restricted, and varied according to the means of the Office. But outside these houses, a great number of children were deprived of every kind of instruction. Struck by this state of things, M. Laurent de Bimorel undertook to restore the district schools.

Then it was that M. Nyel appeared on the scene. In 1657, he was employed, at a salary of a hundred francs, to instruct the little boys of the Office in the rudiments of Christian doctrine, to teach them to read and write. A little later, he interests himself in the children when they are put out to serve their time as apprentices, or get placed as servants. M. de Bimorel found M. Nyel a precious auxiliary for the re-opening of the district schools. From 1661 to 1669 they were opened in divers parts of the town, first in the parish and the cemetery of the church of Saint Maclou, then in the church



The Cathedral of Rouen.

and cemetery of Saint Vivien, then in the Gobelin tower for the Beauvoisin district, then at Darnetal, Saint Sever and elsewhere. From the time of their first establishment until their restoration towards the middle of the seventeenth century, the popular charitable schools of Rouen were in the hands of ecclesiastics. But it was impossible to find amongst the clergy a succession of men willing to devote themselves to these lowly functions, and to renounce for the rest of their lives positions much more in keeping with their habits and education. The school died out for want of masters.

Then came the Brothers instituted by M. Nyel, but this institution lacked foundations, and so declined rapidly after the death of its founder. The Brothers grew tired and fell away from the work, and subjects could not be found to fill up the vacancies made by death or change in their ranks. Various expedients were resorted to, but without success; every effort failed, and the schools of Rouen were falling to pieces.

Then it was that Blessed de la Salle was appealed to. A school had been founded by M. Laurent de Bimorel in 1670 at Darnetal, a manufacturing village at the gates of Rouen, and was kept up by the members of the Congregation of Our Lady, established at the Jesuits'. One of these latter, Abbé Deshayes, who later became parish-priest of Saint Sauveur at Rouen, had been with M. de la Salle at Saint Sulpice, and was acquainted with his work. The Darnetal school-master being dead, Abbé Deshayes gave such an account of Blessed de la Salle's community, that the members all agreed to ask for Brothers to carry on the school. M. Deshayes wrote to Abbé Chardon de Lagny, of the community of Saint Sulpice, and begged him to negotiate the matter. The holy founder did not reject the proposal.

They offered the Brothers the modest sum of one hundred and fifty francs a year— this was not enough to live upon. Nevertheless, Blessed de la Salle accepted, Darnetal was the first seat of M^{me} de Maillefer's and M. Nyel's schools; and he held to founding his there. He sent a Brother to examine the house that was offered to him; it was suitable and near the Church, so he consented to give two Brothers. He stipulated, however, that they were not to be taken from the work of the schools. The village school-masters were often employed by the pastor in the inferior offices of the

church; they wore the surplice, chaunted at the choristers' desk, and did duty as sacristans. These occupations were calculated to interfere with the Rule of the Brothers, and their founder could not



M. Camus de Pont-Carré, First President of the Parliament of Rouen, friend of Blessed de la Salle, from a print of the period. — Engraved by Méaulle.

tolerate such an abuse. The Darnetal school was opened in 1705. In a short time, it was so flourishing and so largely attended, that its fame reached the ears of the Archbishop, who set his heart on having one like it in the episcopal town.

At Rheims, Blessed de la Salle had had to struggle against the

opposition of his family. In Paris, he had had to overcome the jealousy of a fraction of the clergy. At Rouen, he was destined to come into collision with the inveterate routine and the parsimoniousness of a charitable body who, after systematically repulsing the Brothers, now sought to get as much work out of them with as little pay as possible, never stopping to consider whether the willing laborers would not break down under the burden. Thus, on every side, was his work to be strengthened by contradiction. But as God never fails to put the means close to the obstacles, Blessed de la Salle met at Rouen two powerful protectors by whose aid he succeeded in triumphing over all difficulties. One was the Archbishop; the other, M. Camus de Pont-Carré, First President of Parliament.

The Archbishop of Rouen at the time was M^{sr} de Colbert, son of the minister, Doctor of the Sorbonne, member of the French Academy, and one of the founders of the Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Heir to the immense library of his father, he had also inherited his taste for study, and was a patron of learning. As regarded Jansenism, he had not always been as firm as he ought, and, at the clerical Assembly of 1706, had gone so far as to declare that the constitutions of the Popes were not binding on the Church until after they had been accepted by the body of the clergy. Fénelon, however, whose *Maxims of the Saints* M^{sr} de Colbert had condemned some years before, pleaded so earnestly in Rome on behalf of the prelate's good intentions, that the Pope refrained from condemning him. In his diocese, M^{sr} de Colbert was extremely charitable, and devoted himself to the education of the people until his death, which occurred in 1707.

He had been very zealous about the primary schools, and had founded a community of Mistresses at Ernemont. Hearing of the good the Brothers were doing at Darnetal, he felt inclined to hand over to them the free schools of the town, and begged Blessed de la Salle to come and talk over this grave question with him. M. de la Salle saw the Archbishop, accepted with alacrity his overtures, and at once set out to Paris, in order to arrange the affair.

The free schools of Rouen, founded by M. Nyel, were then administered by the "Office of the Hospital" which found the funds and appointed the masters. Although the Archbishop was President of the Assembly, he had some trouble in bringing the members round

WORK IN ROUEN.

to his views. He knocked against a number of prejudices; fortunately, he was ably supported by M. de Pont-Carré; eloquence overcame all resistance.

Blessed de la Salle was invited to come with the Brothers to take possession of the schools confided to his charity. This good news was brought to him by M^{sr} de Colbert in person, he having returned to Paris.

The servant of God was ready. He set out, travelling on foot with his disciples, like the Apostles, sleeping at the inns, and everywhere following the Rule. The pious wayfarers excited admiration and astonishment wherever they passed. People wondered who these men were who walked in silence, grave and recollected, wearing such a strange costume, and whose first care at nightfall, on reaching the inn, was to find a quiet room where they could say their prayers and remain undisturbed in the presence of God.

But, by the time they reached Rouen, the sentiments of the administrators of the Hospital had changed. They would have nothing to do with the Brothers. Fortunately, the Archbishop soon returned, and came to the rescue. He called a meeting of the administrators, and everything was made right.

One Brother was to be charged with the school of Saint Godard, and the other with the little school of Saint Maclou. On the 26th of May, the first Brother was put at the head of the large school in the latter place, in order that the progress of the children, who passed successively from one school to the other, might enable all to form an opinion as to the value of a method which differed from any that had been hitherto employed. The experiment was, apparently, considered to have answered; for, two months later, a demand was made for a third Brother to manage the school of Saint Vivien, and then a fourth for that of Saint Eloi.

The success was, in fact, so marked that the writing-masters took fright. Following the lead of their Paris colleagues, they resolved to check the growth of this new community, whose competition was so dangerous. The Brothers had arrived in the month of May. Three or four months later, the writing-masters addressed a complaint to the administration, setting forth that these Brothers received scholars of all conditions, without inquiring whether they were poor or not, thus doing a great injury to the writing-masters,

and condemning two hundred men to starvation. The administrators did not pay much attention to these complaints. They contented themselves with sending on the address to the Commissaries of the districts, and telling them to take care that the children who went to the Brothers should first be provided with a certificate of poverty, delivered by the parish-priest. The matter dropped for some time, and the Brothers continued to work on unmolested.

They lived at the Hospital, and took their meals there. They overlooked the meals of the poor, and served them before sitting down to table themselves. They instructed the children of the Hospital, and went out to teach in the four large district free schools. However great their zeal and untiring their energy, four or five men were not equal to this amount of sustained work, and they were doomed to break down under it, unless they were relieved.

For some time past, Blessed de la Salle had been thinking of removing his Novitiate from Paris, where it was the object of incessant persecution. Seeing how favorably the Institute was regarded by the ecclesiastical authorities of Rouen, he thought he might find rest there, and consulted the Archbishop, whose advice he valued. The prelate, who had come to appreciate fully the worth of the Institute, was delighted at the idea of having its cradle established in his diocese, and gave a ready assent to M. de la Salle's proposal. This was one of the happiest days in the holy founder's life.

A little way out of the town, at the end of the faubourg Saint Sever, was an old house built in the monumental style, with vast out-houses, and gardens walled in and planted with trees. On crossing the threshold of the place, you felt yourself transported into another world. The noise of the town expired at the entrance of this solitude, and nothing disturbed its peace. Here man was alone with God, and could give himself up to meditation and prayer uninterruptedly. One of the last owners of this vast property had built a chapel there, and dedicated it to St Yon, the disciple of St Denis, and a martyr. It had finally fallen to the inheritance of M^{me} de Louvois, sister-in-law of the Archbishop of Rheims, who, not wishing to inhabit it, wanted to let it. A community of Benedictine Nuns from the monastery of Saint Amand, at Rouen, took it in 1691, and enlarged the chapel. Blessed de la Salle, having

visited it, found it admirably adapted to his purpose. The Nuns consented to cede it to him. In order not to give the alarm to his adversaries, he went privately to M^{me} de Louvois, and informed her of his intention. This lady, who was well acquainted with the virtues of the holy man, felt herself honored in being able to help on his designs, and gave him a lease of six years at a nominal rent of four hundred francs.

Blessed de la Salle took possession of the house without delay. He sent down his furniture, the novices went after it, accompanied by a few priests who had thrown in their lot with his, and, by the end of August 1705, the Novitiate was installed.

M^r de Colbert had given M. de la Salle the most extensive faculties, and the servant of God had appointed as masters of novices Brother Bartholomew, one of the most pious and competent members of the community.

The holy man took advantage of this quiet home to renew the spirit of his much tried disciples by a retreat. During the school-holidays, he sent for them from their various abodes, and for eight days, assisted by the priests who had accompanied him, he inflamed their fervor by his exhortations, and by the example of his fidelity in the observance of the Rule.

Whatever be the humility of the Saints, the good they do cannot long remain hidden. The fame of the virtues of Blessed de la Salle and his disciples was noised abroad, and it began to be said that such men ought not to confine their influence to the charity schools, that their care of childhood should have a wider scope, and that they ought to take in boarders at Saint Yon.

The holy founder never refused to do good when the opportunity was presented to him. He took in the children whose families had great difficulty in keeping them at home, he put them under the direction of an experienced Brother, with rules suited to their age and condition, and soon obtained results that amazed the parents.

This skill which he displayed in the education of youth inspired some persons with the desire of confiding to him children that were hard to manage, and who could not be made amenable to ordinary treatment. He accepted these too. They were submitted to a stricter discipline, and as, at that age, defects have seldom struck deep roots, but generally result from dissipation and too much

liberty, the example of other children, well-behaved and happy, the pure country air and the salutary influence of religion soon got the better of their hitherto insubordinate natures.

There were, besides these young rebels, others of a different stamp, vicious boys, bad in grain, and for whom it was necessary to call in the severity of the law. Blessed de la Salle did not recoil even before this ungrateful task. He consented to receive the lads, and set apart a certain portion of the house for them; here, if they did not become converted, at least they were prevented from growing still more corrupt by contact with hardened criminals. These children were only shut up on an order from the First President, and at the request of their parents. Later on, it became necessary to obtain *lettres de cachet* (a sealed order), and these were only delivered in case of moral depravity, or insanity.

Hard to manage as these new inmates were, they soon began to feel the effects of the salutary discipline under which they lived, and the results were marvellous. Several young fellows who had been considered incorrigible were touched by grace. Some went back home, and led exemplary lives which caused their early scandals to be forgotten. Others asked to receive the habit, or left the house of detention to enter monasteries, and expiate the disorders of their youth by prayer and penance.

There were, therefore, at Saint Yon, without counting the Novitiate and the Brothers, three distinct establishments— the boarders who were being taught reading, writing and arithmetic, or higher sciences, such as drawing, geometry and architecture; the unmanageable children who needed particular treatment for their temper and behaviour; and lastly the “enclosed ones,” who were submitted to a penitential treatment. These communities all lived side by side without coming in contact with each other. They occupied separate parts of the vast building, and so great was the order which reigned throughout, that even silence was not disturbed, and the Brothers could give themselves up in perfect quiet to prayer and retirement. M. de Pont-Carré, the friend and protector of M. de la Salle, loved to come there and rest from the duties of his office, and stole many an hour from the world to spend in this house whose pure and holy atmosphere drew him nearer to God.

The Saint Yon house depended on the parish of Saint Sever, and as it had a chapel, the parish-priest had been careful to reserve his

parochial rights. The chapel was to be closed to the public during mass and the church services. The Brothers and their boys were to assist at the parochial mass on Sundays, and make their Easter Communion in the parish. On Easter Sunday, they were not to have mass in the chapel. The children were to make their First Communion in the parish, after having been examined by the parish-priest, and, lastly, the chaplain must be approved by him.

This agreement was made on March 22nd 1706, between the parish-priest and M. de la Salle, and received the approbation of the Archbishop.

It did not last long. As soon as the holy founder had boarders who were "confined by order of Parliament," he could not possibly take them out to mass and the services, and was compelled therefore to procure these benefits for them in the house itself. The parish-priest took offence, and there arose a conflict on the point which caused endless trouble to Blessed de la Salle.

Meanwhile, the Brothers who were in the town were done to death with work. They were on foot at five o'clock, and then got up their poor, and made them say their prayers. At eight o'clock four of them went off to the schools. They came back at mid-day, served the poor at their dinner, and when these had eaten, they sat down to table themselves. Then, they went back to their schools, returned home at six, and conducted the poor to the refectory, ate after them, said night prayers, and went to bed, to begin again on the morrow. The two Brothers at Saint Maclou had each of them over one hundred children to teach; the Brother at Saint Eloi had the same number, and the one at Saint Godard had over a hundred and fifty. The fifth, who stayed at the Office to instruct the poor, had still more. The most robust health could not have stood out against the strain of such a load; the task would have required three times as many workmen. But the Brothers never flagged; they went on unmurmuringly, wearing themselves out, from May 1705 to June 1707. When one of them dropped from exhaustion, M. de la Salle put another in his place. Seeing, however, that no health could stand it, and that the community was being drained by this constant demand, he addressed a petition to the administrators to beg that the engagement might be modified.

On the 2nd of August 1707, it was decided at an assembly presided over by the First President, that the Brothers should be put

in possession of all the charity schools of the town, relieved of the obligation of coming back to the Hospital to serve the poor, and allowed to live in a house of their own. They were to be ten in number— two for the Saint Godard school, two for that of Saint Eloi, two for that of Saint Maclou, and two for that of Saint Vivien; the remaining two were to keep the school at the hospital, and to reside there. The classes were open from eight to eleven in the morning, and from two to five in the afternoon. The administrators provided tables and benches, and paid a salary of six hundred francs. As the house alone cost the Brothers three hundred francs a year, this sum was evidently not enough for their wants, so the deficit was filled up by private charity.

The Brothers had a hard life of it. While they toiled faithfully at their daily task, the rich forgot them, and left them to suffer cold and hunger and sickness. The poor, whose children they were teaching and bringing up, often repaid them by ingratitude. More than once they were pelted and insulted in the streets; but their patience never failed.

They were still pursued by the ill-will of the writing-masters. The latter, finding that their complaints had produced no effect, had recourse to calumny. They accused M. de la Salle of feeding his boarders badly, of confiding their instruction to ignorant masters, and of thus robbing the money of their parents and of the administration.

These reports grew so loud that the City Intendant, whose ears they reached, became alarmed, and resolved to see for himself whether they were founded or not. He consulted M. de Pont-Carré, who was himself devoted to the Brothers. This gentleman advised him to visit the house at once, and see with his own eyes what was going on; he volunteered even to go with him, and the two presented themselves at Saint Yon together. This was towards 1708.

Blessed de la Salle was ill, and confined to his room, a miserable little cell, low and dark, close to the stables, which he had chosen for his lodging. He received the distinguished visitors in this humble place. M. de Pont-Carré informed him of the motive of their visit.

“ I venture to assure you,” said the holy man, “ that the house is not as badly ordered as you have heard. We give to each the

office that is suited to him. The novices are occupied with exercises of piety, imbibing the spirit of their vocation, and entering on the practice of those virtues which are proper to their state; others are lay Brothers, occupied solely with the temporal cares of the house. As they are only obliged to do manual work, it is not necessary that they should know how to read and write. The third are young men that are being trained in the lower classes, and we are waiting till they are competent before we give them any fixed employment. They are under the care of a wise and prudent director who sees that all acquit themselves becomingly of their duty, and reports of them to us. As regards the boarders, their food is regulated according to what they pay. Some pay a hundred francs, others fifty, others pay as much as two, three, and four hundred francs. It is only just that these different prices should supply different fare. But, as far as that goes, all are in good health."

To prove the truth of this statement, Blessed de la Salle sent for the boarders, one after the other, so that his visitors might judge of their perfect health by their cheerful and healthy countenances. The Intendant was thoroughly convinced of the utter falsehood of the reports he had heard, and promised to treat them as they deserved. He went away delighted with the house, and full of respect and admiration for Blessed de la Salle.

"Well, sir," said M. de Pont-Carré, as they went away together, "did I not tell you that you would be satisfied with all you were going to see?"



Coming from school in the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTH.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the want of schools for the children of the people was being felt all over France, and masters to teach in them were being clamored for. The town of Marseilles, so noted for its intelligence and its faith, was not behind hand in this movement. The parish-priest of Saint Laurent, a district inhabited chiefly by sailors, was full of zeal for the instruction of youth. He had special sermons preached by his curates, he taught the catechism himself on Sundays and Feasts, and neglected nothing to spread the knowledge of Christian doctrine. But this was not enough. Large schools were wanted, and the only way of founding them was to form a charitable committee whose members would pledge themselves to provide a certain sum annually, and find a preceptor who would keep the school. A meeting was called to discuss the plan. It was approved, and the first general assembly of founders took place a month later, on the 10th of June 1704. No time had been lost. Thirty-four persons had subscribed for a hundred francs a year; amongst them were the Bishop, the governor of the town, the mayor and the aldermen. The two church-wardens on duty then set to look for a preceptor, and a house wherein to hold

the classes. Abbé Baron was elected master of the school, with a salary of one hundred and eighty francs a year. The house was also found, but it was a very small one, and soon proved inadequate.

The following year, another general assembly was held. The founders, well satisfied with abbé Baron, raised his salary to two hundred and, twenty francs, and on account of the increased number of children, they resolved to buy a new house. In 1706, on the 21st of January, at the fourth general assembly, a letter was read from the Bishop of Marseilles to Father Croiset, the Jesuit, about the schools. The prelate had heard of M. de la Salle's schools. He had visited them, had conversed with the pious founder, and had been struck by the way the Brothers instructed the children. He, therefore, expressed a desire that they should be asked to take charge of a school; and he added that the best masters were to be had at Avignon. This desire of the Bishop's was an order for the assembly. They had, indeed, already heard two wealthy merchants of Marseilles, M. Morelet and M. Jourdain, speak in high praise of the schools at Avignon, of the discipline of the scholars, the piety of the masters, and the novelty of the method. These two merchants contributed largely to the foundation of the new school.

One of the church-wardens, M. Joseph Treuillard, deputed by the assembly, went to Avignon, and brought back two Brothers, one of whom was Brother Albert of the Child Jesus. They were presented to the assembly, publicly congratulated, and it was agreed that they should have each a salary of one hundred and fifty francs. The school was opened on the 6th of March 1706; but soon it grew so large, that they had to look out for a house for a second school. Meantime, in order to satisfy the demands of the school-masters, those implacable adversaries of the Brothers' work, all the children whose parents were at all able to pay for schooling were forbidden the schools; they were not to take up the places of the poor.

On the 17th of July, the same year, a touching ceremony took place. M. André Porry, the donor of the new house, died, and the children were taken to his funeral by the Brothers. They walked through the town in good order several hundred of them, their eyes cast down, their rosary in their hands, praying for their benefactor,

who was buried in the chapel of the hospital of charity. This unwonted spectacle edified the whole city, and the Brothers became very popular.

The school went on well till 1720, when the plague broke out. One of the Brothers fell a victim to it, and the others devoted themselves to the care of the sick. The epidemic ceased, the town was, as it were, renewed, faith was quickened, and all felt the need of giving a Christian education to the young. The Bishop—the grand and admirable Belzunce—wished to found Christian schools in the five parishes of the town, and, with the help of several good men, he succeeded in doing so. Even at the hospital, he asked for Brothers to bring up the poor children there. The confraternity of Our Lady of Good Help gave them a fine spacious house, and in 1727—they being then sixteen in community—they were received as one of the constituted bodies, and numbered amongst the Regulars of the town.

The Dijon schools were founded in 1705, by the assistance of M. Claude Rigoley, President of the Chamber of Accounts, brother-in-law of the parish-priest of Saint Sulpice, a pious and charitable man, a daily communicant. His family wished to co-operate in the good work. His uncle, M. de Gergy, offered to pay four hundred francs a year for the support of two Brothers, and, to insure the payment, had sunk a sum of eight thousand francs. M. Rigoley, accordingly, wrote to M. de la Salle that the necessary funds were secured. The holy man accepted the offer, and sent two Brothers, who opened their school in June 1705, in the parish of Saint Pierre. The Vicar general and the mayor, and various other notabilities, contributed to this establishment.

The Brothers were so devoted and displayed so much ability in the management of their school, that poor children were sent to them from all the parishes of the town until they were overladen. A charitable person then came forward, and founded a second school for the poor of Saint Philibert. A third Brother was sent. Soon after this, a fourth came, and a third school was opened. They were patronized by the President, and, after his death, by his widow

and children; the magistrates looked kindly on them; but their best friends on earth and their most powerful patrons in heaven, were the poor. It would be difficult to find in any family archives a more precious document than the following letter, signed "*The poor of Dijon.*" Its eloquence, alas! is no longer the language of the poor of the nineteenth century :

" You know, gentlemen, how full this town is of poor, and how wanting in zealous persons to look after the education of our children— which is, as all agree, the most necessary of good works, for the public as well as for individuals. This it is that induces us to have recourse with confidence to your charity, humbly entreating it to second the designs of Providence, which presents so favorable an opportunity for bringing up our children as Christians and securing their eternal salvation...

" You are, gentlemen, our resource in the great good that is about to be secured to us permanently, but which must fall through if your charitable hands do not uphold it. We expect this favor from your solid religion and your ardent charity; our hope is the more founded in that we have the honor to be united to you by a common faith, to be your countrymen, your neighbors, to see our poor homes united to yours. We are all, so to speak, children of the same mother, the holy Church, sheep of the same flock, disciples and servants of the same master, Jesus-Christ, our shepherd; we all partake of the same parish bread, of the same word of God, of the same services, of the same Sacraments at the same Table of the Lord, of the same Passover, and we hope to be all united one day in the inheritance of our common Father, perhaps because of this holy establishment. We are, finally, the sentinels and keepers of your houses, in defence of which we are willing to sacrifice our lives.

" May all these motives, gentlemen, induce you not to abandon us in so pressing an opportunity. On our side, we venture to assure you, gentlemen, that we are all going to redouble prayers to beg of God to shower down on you and your families all sorts of spiritual and temporal blessings, and to lengthen your days, to which are attached the glory of God, the lessening of ignorance, of idleness, and all the vices of youth; the good employment of time, peace, and tranquillity of parents in their homes, and of the public in the streets and the churches; the maintenance of those Brothers whose life is so regular, and of such public utility; the salvation of so many poor families who have not the means of paying the masters by the month, and who would rather use their money in paying their tax, and the other necessities of their house; finally, the good instruction of so many poor children, who are, one may say, abandoned, and who are the general edification of the town. Happy are we, if, by these marks of our just gratitude, we can testify to you with what respect and submission we have the honor to be, gentlemen,

" Your very humble, submissive and very obedient servants,

" *The Poor of Dijon.* "

This prayer was heard, and the needful money granted. We see, therefore, that in the eighteenth century the problem of free education for the poor existed as in our own day, and that it was solved by the unaided effort of charity. But we also see that sentiments of

devotion on the one side and respect on the other, bound the rich and the poor together, and that the mutual good will that religion kept up between them, facilitated the solution of many problems which now divide them in two hostile camps.

It was the piety of a holy Bishop that called the Brothers to Mende in Gévaudan. M^{sr} de Piancourt, former Abbot of the monastery of Saint Lieufroid, in the diocese of Evreux, Doctor of Theology of the Faculty of Paris and Bishop of Mende from 1671, was very zealous for the instruction of youth, and had its development in the diocese greatly at heart. He wrote, therefore, to Blessed de la Salle. The holy man did not care to send two Brothers. He preferred to establish a full community, composed of four Brothers for the schools, and a fifth to manage the house. However, he desired Brother Ponce, who was at Avignon, to go to Mende, and make enquiries. This journey took place towards the end of February 1707. Some time afterwards, at the request of the parish-priest of Mende, an ecclesiastic of that town, M. Boulet, mentioned the affair to the servant of God, whom he met in Paris at an audience of the Archbishop's, and went to see him where he was staying, near the Porte Saint-Roch. He made him see that the town was too poor to support a large establishment, and that it would be much better to found a school, let it be ever so small, and trust to its spreading in time through the diocese.

Blessed de la Salle, on hearing this, changed his views, and the school was founded in March 1707. The Brothers were to have one hundred and fifty crowns¹ each, "which were very little," remarks Abbé Boulet, "because they never would accept any little present or help from the parents, even if they were dying of hunger, and they could not count on making anything themselves, since they never meddled with any business outside their own calling."

Brother Ponce, who was alone to do all the work, fell ill. The work was so considerable, that he could not get through it unassisted, and the Bishop was obliged to ask for a second Brother. His

¹ A crown, *écu*, was worth three francs.

letter deserves to be quoted :—“ I cannot, my dear sir, bless God enough for having inspired you with the design of forming school-masters to teach the young, and train them in Christian piety. Seminaries form good priests, but school-masters, by giving the first impressions of piety and faith, may contribute towards the sanctification of all Christians.

“ It is impossible to say how pleased I am with the Brothers that you sent me. I shall be greatly obliged if you will send another who can undertake both writing and arithmetic; for this is the way to attract the young and thus impart to them early impressions of Christian piety. I will give them, on my part, all the protection they can expect, so that they will have entire satisfaction in their work here. ”

The excellent Bishop, who had a particular esteem for the holy man, did not long survive the foundation of this school. He died at Mende, on the 13th of December, the same year. By his will, he bequeathed the Brothers a sum which secured the perpetuity of their foundation, and his successor, M. Baglion de la Salle de Sail-lant, continued his patronage to them. Later on, an evil wind blew upon the Mende school. The Brothers sent there proved unworthy of the trust that had been reposed in them, and their Superior had to suffer from their conduct. The Saints have always had to bear these trials.

The Brothers were called to the Cevennes to rescue the young from heresy. The Huguenots had been overcome by arms; but religion was to finish their conquest. Might had overthrown them, but they had yet to be converted. The town of Alais having been raised to an episcopal see, M^r François Chevalier de Saulx was named Bishop, and selected M. Merrez, Canon of Nimes, for his Vicar general. His first care was to provide good school-masters. M. Merrez had known Blessed de la Salle at Saint Sulpice, and made haste to write to him.

The holy founder at once sent him two Brothers, with whom the Bishop was so pleased that he asked for more. The following is his letter to Blessed de la Salle :—“ We have here, dear sir, your Brothers, the masters with whom every one is satisfied, which makes me wish for many more of them to spread through the towns of the Cevennes. If I had thirty, I should find plenty for them to do. I have the honor to thank you for those that we have, and to ask

you for some others. I do, and I will continue to do all I possibly can for them. They are doing incalculable good. In order to keep alive in them the spirit you have imparted to them, I will take care to watch over them, and I will give them my advice whenever it may be necessary, and, moreover, I will let you know of it. If we can spread the help of your dear and good Brothers, it will be an infallible means of making great progress in the families of our Catholic poor. I confide my sentiments to you, dear sir, in order that you may feel willing that we should act in unison in this lost country which so much needs your charitable zeal. You may count upon it, I shall spare nothing for the assistance of your Brothers, and I shall take an affectionate interest in all their little concerns on every occasion. I ask for your good prayers, assuring you that it is with all my heart that I subscribe myself your very humble and obedient servant. ”

This truly apostolic letter is dated January 28th 1708, and signed : “ F., First Bishop of Alais. ” It throws a vivid light upon Episcopal and Christian life in that eighteenth century which was to terminate in revolt and bloodshed.

At Grenoble, a number of charitable persons formed an association for the relief of the poor and the instruction of youth. The initiative was taken by ecclesiastics ; but by and by the association opened its doors to laymen, members of Parliament, and many persons of rank, all of whom were leading a life controlled by the highest Christian standard. No one was admitted as member until he had been a long time on trial. The members elected a superior, and obeyed him promptly. At the death of an associate, a requiem mass was celebrated, all the members being present, and every member who was a priest said mass for the repose of his soul.

M^r Allemand de Montmartin, Bishop of Grenoble, took the direction of the association. The members met at stated times to discuss their common work, and one of the charities that most engaged their attention was the foundation of Christian schools. They resolved to found some in the town ; but for this masters and

money were necessary. They convened a meeting, and exposed their plan, which was approved. All present promised to give a yearly subscription of twenty or fifty louis¹ according to their means, and to leave by will a sum of money that would bring in that amount yearly. Abbé de Saléon, then first Canon of Saint André and later bishop of Agen, and Abbé Canel, Councillor clerk of Parliament, were deputed to find masters. The first named had known Blessed de la Salle at Saint Sulpice, and in the beginning of the year 1706 he went to Paris and saw him, and asked him for two Brothers. Abbé Canel, who was also a Sulpician, joined his entreaties to those of his colleague. Blessed de la Salle did not refuse; meantime, the members had to get ready the school at Grenoble. Fifteen months passed.

When all was ready, Abbé Canel wrote to the holy man on August 30th 1707: — “ When I was in Paris, some fifteen months ago, I had the honor of calling on you, my dear sir, to ask if you would give us two Brothers of your community to teach in a charity school at Grenoble, and you were so kind as to lead me to think you would grant our request. I think that M^{sr} the Bishop of Gap, who remained in Paris after me, also spoke to you on the subject. Since then, we have made every thing ready for their lodging and maintenance. I, therefore, beg of you to let us have them with as little delay as possible, and to tell us how much we are to provide both for their journey and their support at Grenoble. We shall take the necessary funds from the alms destined to good works, for we look upon this as one of the best to which the money could be applied. If you will kindly write me word how much is needed for the journey, I will have the amount remitted to you at once. ”

Blessed de la Salle could not resist so generous an offer. It was not customary to defray the travelling expenses of the Brothers, which were often a heavy tax on the poor community. He sent off two Brothers, who opened a school in the parish of Saint Laurent. President Bara, M. Gelin, the grand provost, his brother and their mother were amongst its benefactors. Abbé Didier, Canon of Saint Laurent, had constituted himself the spiritual director of the Brothers, and filled the place of Blessed de la Salle towards them. Finally, M^{sr} de Montmartin supported them by his influence and his

¹ A louis was 2½ francs.

purse, and his successors inherited his sentiments of affection for affection for them.

With such patronage supplementing the devotedness of the Brothers, the school soon prospered. In a few years another had to be founded in the parish of Saint Hugues, and later on M^{sr} de Caulet, one of the successors of M^{sr} de Montmartin, confided the children of the general hospital to the Brothers. Grenoble was, in truth, a city blessed of God.

In 1708, a priest of the town of Vans, Abbé Vincent, one of the great Nivernais families, being at Avignon, heard about Blessed de la Salle's schools and went to see them. He came away delighted, and resolved to have similar ones in his own town. Vans is situated in the diocese of Uzès, towards the Cevennes, six leagues from Alais. Almost the whole population were Huguenots; the children were brought up without principles; the morality of the people was deplorable.

Before leaving Avignon, Abbé Vincent went to a notary, and, in order to carry out his plan, made his will. The will is dated July 20th 1708. The testator declares that he will live and die in the faith of the holy Catholic, Roman, and Apostolic Church, and be buried with the simplicity becoming a poor priest. He constitutes the Brothers his heirs, and charges them with the instruction of the youth of the town of Vans, to form them all to piety, and to imbue them with the principles of Catholicity.

“ I am persuaded, ” he says, “ that the greater number of the children of this town fall into evil courses from want of education. Born in heresy, they have no sentiment or knowledge of the Catholic religion, and this is the fatal cause of their disorderly lives. ” Abbé Vincent implores his family not to take it amiss if he puts the interests of religion and the poor before theirs; and that they may not consider themselves disinherited, and find in this a pretext for attacking his will, he bequeathes them each five pence. He implores, at the same time, the Bishops of Uzès to honor with their patronage and support a foundation so useful to religion generally, and to the town of Vans in particular.

The priest was not rich, and his legacy was a moderate one; but it was given from the heart, and it was blessed. The testator died on the 19th of September 1710 in the town of Aubenas. After his death, the will was sent to Blessed de la Salle, who accepted it. He was not one to be stopped by the money question when there was work to be done, and in a very short time the school was opened at Vans. It was not however done without difficulty. There was great opposition in the town. The Huguenot population would not hear of Catholic school-masters. The Brothers overcame this resistance and then their adversaries had recourse to all sorts of ill-treatment to disgust them with the work. They insulted them in the streets, they set traps for them, they raised barricades before the door so as to prevent their coming out, and several times made an attack on their lives. One day a crowd collected round the house, and said they were going to lay siege to it, and massacre every one in it. They stoned the windows, and tried to break in the doors. The Brothers did not defend themselves; they remained in their oratory on their knees in prayer, offering up their lives to God for His glory. God did not accept the sacrifice, or rather he wished them to be His otherwise than by martyrdom. The police came to the rescue, dispersed the rioters, and arrested the ring-leaders, who were severely punished. The town resumed its wonted tranquillity, the school soon prospered, and Blessed de la Salle praised God who had deigned to uphold the courage of the Brothers, and deliver them from another trial.

In 1710, Abbé Huchon, a Lazarist, pastor of Versailles, also asked for Brothers. M. de la Salle sent him two, who took up their residence in a hired house in the Deer Park. One of them was amongst the most remarkable of the community. Well informed, distinguished in manner, he excelled in his profession, and his school, by its flourishing condition, attracted great praise. It attracted too much, and vanity ruined him. Versailles was a dangerous abode for Religious. The court resided there, and one inhaled in the place a certain atmosphere of worldliness that was fatal to weak characters. This Brother was infected by it, and lost the love of

his Rule. Blessed de la Salle soon perceived this, and, concerned above all for the soul of his disciple, he wanted to remove him from this pestilential air before it was too late. But the Brother had foreseen this, and insinuated himself into the good graces of the parish-priest, who took his side, and positively refused to let him be removed, threatening to close the school if he were. In vain did the servant of God urge the reason that guided him; the other would listen to nothing—the alleged fears were all groundless; he promised to watch over the danger himself. M. de la Salle had to give way.

Soon after this, they came one day to inform the parish-priest that the man for whom he had so rashly stood bail, had thrown aside his habit and gone off. The parish-priest immediately sent after him an old missionary, skilful in converting souls, who came up with the renegade at the end of one of the avenues. But prayers, threats, all were in vain, and the pastor perceived too late how rash it is of strangers to meddle with the government of communities, and prevent the removal of subjects against the judgment of the superior; for superiors, with the burden of authority, have the grace of discernment. A thousand symptoms, imperceptible to others, warn them of the coming danger, and like skilful captains they haul in sail before the advancing storm. Moreover, in a community, the general good is always to be considered before individual convenience.

This accident did not slacken M. Huchon's zeal for the free schools. He soon established a second near his parish, and ended by buying a house which served as a little seminary in which he settled them.

Instruction had long been neglected in the town of Moulins. The archives contain ancient documents which enable us to trace the first primary school held in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by one or two masters in the chapel of the Menestreaux. But this establishment, where the lessons were frequently interrupted, represented both primary and secondary education. The learned

look upon it as the cradle of the college, and it could only give a very imperfect education to the children.

In the year 1675, Gaspard de Savignac, bachelor of the Sorbonne, a discreet and venerable man, was pastor of the parish of Iseure, which he administered with the help of four curates. One of them, M. Louis Aubery, was a very old priest, very austere, filled with zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He had all his life lived up to evangelical simplicity, and employed all his means in doing good. The same Divine influence which had swept over the soul of Blessed de la Salle in 1682, and impelled him to devote himself to the education of poor children, had also passed over that of Abbé Aubery. That same year, when Blessed de la Salle was opening his house to the school-masters, Abbé Aubery, who had not yet heard of the holy man's undertaking at Rheims, was receiving children into his house, and teaching them. In 1686, Abbé Aubery gave his goods to the poor, and his house to the pastor of Saint Iseure, that he might use it for the primary school. Precisely in this same year, Blessed de la Salle was making a similar sacrifice. The analogy between the two is strikingly significant. Distant from each other some fifty or a hundred leagues, the instruction of the poor was occupying both these generous souls, and both were creating and developing works of the same nature.

Abbé Aubery, after having begun the work, never let it drop. He taught in the school himself for years. He instructed children in Christian doctrine and the catechism, in reading Latin and French, in writing, arithmetic and decyphering manuscripts. His zeal was so great, his school so flourishing, that the Bishop of Autun, in 1698, named him Rector of the charity schools of the town.

He could not carry on this work alone; but he sought in vain for auxiliaries. Everywhere masters were wanting. He took in two young priests whose zeal soon grew tired of the work, and in 1699, the school, that it cost him so much to open, had to be closed for lack of teachers.

Abbé Aubery was not disheartened. He took advantage of this interruption to repair and enlarge the house, and, in 1701, he opened the school again, and taught in it himself. One hundred and fifty children answered at once to his invitation, and he went on teaching them for several years. In 1709, he went to Paris to

try and get Letters patent in favor of his school. He stayed at Saint Sulpice, and, hearing about Blessed de la Salle, he at once made acquaintance with him. God had now brought him face to face with the man and the work he had been seeking for seven and twenty years. On his return to Moulins, he took full information concerning the schools kept there by the Brothers. He received, moreover, from Marseilles, a wonderful account of the results of their teaching. He then wrote to Blessed de la Salle, asking him for two Brothers, who were immediately sent to him.

They opened their classes in 1710, and here, as elsewhere, their success surpassed all expectation. They had over three hundred children, and Abbé Languet de Gergy, Vicar general of Autun, and since Archbishop of Sens, was so charmed with their manner of teaching, that he entreated them to come to the parish once a week, to teach catechism to the children in presence of the young clerics who were invited on purpose that they might benefit by their method.

In spite of the arrival of the Brothers, Abbé Aubery remained Rector of the school. He it was who continued to support and manage it; he it was who directed the studies. In 1711, he drew up a little set of rules which it is interesting to compare with the *Management of Christian schools* of Blessed de la Salle, on which it is in a measure modelled, but from which it differs in some points. "The charity-schools of Moulins are placed under the direction of a committee of five persons: the two parish-priests, who are life members, two laymen named for six years and re-eligible, and a Rector who is always an ecclesiastic first named by the Bishop, and then by the Board. The masters are taken from the Community of Brothers. If this Community should not be available, then priests shall be chosen, and if these cannot be had, then wise and virtuous laymen who are not married, and who never must marry, or have been married. The children begin by learning Latin, they go on to French, and then to manuscripts which they must bring with them."

These rules were approved by the Bishop. He consecrated the method of the Brothers, modified in a few points by the personal views of Abbé Aubery.

In 1717, Abbé Aubery, feeling himself growing old, wished to insure the perpetuity of his foundation, and wrote to the Bishop,

who sent him a new approbation with leave to apply for Letters patent.

Thanks to the intervention of the Abbot of Septfonds, thanks also to the warm support of all the Royal functionaries and all the notabilities of the town of Moulins, the Letters patent were granted. They are dated June 1717; but it was necessary to have them registered by the Parliament of Paris, and here it was that difficulties started up. Parliament ordered an enquiry *de commodò et incommodo*. Some persons came forward to say that "the schools were useless, prejudicial to the poor, to artisans, and good for nothing but to form forgers, cheats and rascals." The general hospital of Moulins, which had at first consented to the foundation, drew back; it wanted to absorb Abbé Aubery's work, and had recourse to every sort of trick to succeed in this. It carried the town with it, and persuaded the municipality that the Abbé had no right to keep a school. The law-suit lasted ten years, and cost over a thousand francs. Finally, Abbé Aubery won the day. The Letters patent were registered in 1728. More fortunate than Blessed de la Salle, Abbé Aubery was allowed to see the triumph of his efforts, and survived the legal recognition of his school three years.

There lived at Boulogne-sur-Mer a pious layman, M. de la Cocherie, who spent all his time and all his money in doing good. He heard of the free schools, and wished to found some. He had no difficulty in winning the consent of the Bishop of Boulogne, who had founded them at Calais some years previously, and so could judge of their value. As M. de la Cocherie's liberalities had left him with only enough for the bare necessities of life, he was obliged to have recourse to the purses of his friends. The funds were found, and four Brothers sent by M. de la Salle were received with all honor by the Bishop, who insisted on lodging them in his seminary until a house was found for them.

Later on, a second school was founded in the upper town.

This house at Boulogne was the last foundation Blessed de la Salle made in the provinces before he died. But, before continuing the history of the persecutions which formed the web of his life, we

must stop a while to consider this series of foundations, and the facilities which our ancient laws afforded for doing good and securing the instruction of the people.

The schools are founded everywhere after very much the same fashion. Charitable persons hear about them, and become eager to endow their native place with them; these benefactors are priests, bishops, magistrates, pious persons of all conditions. Funds are collected, a house is bought, a sum is sunk to insure an income to the establishment, and it is thus protected against possible vicissitudes. If the founder himself is not rich enough, he appeals to others, he forms a group of charitable persons who club together and provide the money, and watch over the use made of it.

Faith was ardent in those days, and made charity fruitful. When we cast a glance on the works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we are struck with wonder by the multitude of charitable foundations. The spread of the Institute of the Brothers is in itself a most remarkable instance of this. North and South, in the remote provinces as in Paris, the Brothers are in demand, and welcomed with enthusiasm, and their praise and that of their work are in all men's mouths. Everywhere the need for schools is felt, but above all of schools for the poor. Whenever they are to be founded, money is always forthcoming. Parents, priests, magistrates, all alike, are full of good will; but they know not where to turn for masters. The Brothers then appear like the artisans of Providence. They arrive at the right moment to do the needful work, and have all the requirements for doing it well. As to M. de la Salle, we have seen with what veneration his name is already surrounded. Bishops feel honored in receiving him as their guest, towns quarrel for the privilege of his presence, and he is already revered as a benefactor of humanity. But, alas! it is not so nearer home, and he is still the object of fresh persecutions, and every day beset by new enemies. That bright halo which encircles his brow in the distance is in reality a crown of thorns. God so willed it for His glory and the sanctification of His servant. The thorny crowns are the only ones that never pass away.



Blessed de la Salle prepares himself for a journey to Rome ; but the Bishop of Marseilles begs him to give up that voyage.

CHAPTER XIII.

FRESH TRIALS

ALTHOUGH the Brothers had now been eighteen years in the Rue Princesse—in the parish of Saint Sulpice—they had never been able to make any changes in the house, and it remained as inconvenient as ever. It was here that they all collected every night after teaching in their schools in the various districts of the parish ; and here also they passed their Sundays and holidays since the Novitiate had been removed to Saint Yon. The house was unhealthy ; it had no garden, and the Brothers were obliged to take their recreation in a court overlooked by houses on all sides. The street itself was narrow and dark, and it was impossible to pass in and out of it without exciting the curiosity of the neighbors. Blessed de la Salle, who was then living at the Saint Roch school, was very anxious to find another place for the Brothers ; but, as he had not much influence with the parish-priest, he did not dare broach the matter to him. He confided the affair to a Brother whom M. de la Chétardie held in great esteem and affection. A house, which looked suitable, was found in the district of the Incurables, near the barrier of Sèvres. It was quietly situated, spacious, and had a large garden. The Brother spoke about it to M. de la Chétardie. The house was

hired for four hundred francs a year, and the Brothers moved into it. They remained there until 1722, when they purchased a house Rue Notre Dame-des-Champs, near the Convent of Saint Thecla.

A few months after they were installed in the Rue de Sèvres, the Saint Roch school passed into other hands; Blessed de la Salle then came to reside with them, and employed the short term of rest in overlooking his writings, and publishing a correct edition of them.

But peace never lasted long for him; he was destined to suffer and to do battle all his life. Want again seized upon him, and threatened to carry off his whole flock. It was during the year 1709, which was so cruel for the poor. The harvest had been bad, the winter was long and severe. Famine desolated France. The rich curtailed their alms, and the poor found no resource in their work or in the charity of others.

The Brothers of the Rue de Sèvres began by pinching and restricting themselves in every way to the bare necessities. In spite of the intense cold, they had no fire, and their worn out clothes were not replaced. In the refectory, they ate just what prevented them from dying of hunger. They did not complain, however; for Blessed de la Salle was in their midst, always serene, sharing their want, and sustaining their courage. "Don't fear," he would say to them, "God never fails those who hope in Him. Everything is granted to lively faith and perfect confidence, even miracles when they are necessary. Jesus Christ has pledged Himself to furnish all that is needful to those who are seeking His justice and His kingdom. He has never denied it to those who serve Him; every page of Scripture testifies to this truth. Nothing happens in this life except what God permits or ordains. Good and painful things, poverty and riches come from His hand, and He distributes them all with wisdom and kindness. If we have received so many benefits from His liberality, why should we refuse to accept a few penalties from His hand? He is the Lord— let Him do as He sees fit."

Blessed de la Salle suffered more for the Brothers than for himself. Suffering was familiar to him; it was his nourishment; but he trembled for those whom he had to lead; he was fearful lest their souls should falter under the burden.

The Brothers who were abroad were his great anxiety; for he was not by their side to cheer them up and sustain them. The scourge

was laying waste all France, and all the houses of the Brothers felt its cruel grip; but Rouen had suffered more especially. Blessed de la Salle, as we know, had removed his Novitiate thither. There were about thirty Brothers there; ten were teaching in the schools of the town; of the remaining, some were novices, others were charged with the care of the boarders of Saint Yon, and the service of the house. They had not here, as elsewhere, any endowment which put them beyond the reach of want. Their sole resources were the six hundred francs paid them yearly by the Board of the municipality, and the scanty fruits yielded by the garden of Saint Yon, whose sandy soil, despite the patient tilling of the Brothers, yielded but a poor crop. Out of this income, they had to pay the rent of the house which ate up half of it. All told, there remained to the Community, for their food and other necessaries, three hundred francs. They would have been all dead at the end of a month if private charity had not come to their assistance; but during the famine provisions were at famine price, and people gave much less. To fill up the measure of their trials, the new Archbishop, M^{sr} d'Aubigné, did not like M. de la Salle and his work. He had allowed himself to be circumvented, and thought he was doing a great deal in not turning the Brothers out of his diocese. The population, moreover, had not quite forgotten its old prejudices, and many a time the Brothers were pelted and insulted in the streets by the men whose children they were bringing up. In fact, their destitution was complete, and their holy founder could not help them; in his own house, there were barely the necessaries of life. He resolved to call back a certain number of the Brothers. He left the masters to keep the schools going, but he called away the novices. The inmates of the Paris house were thus nearly doubled, and there was not accommodation for so many. Mattresses were put down in the rooms, and here the poor new-comers stretched themselves to seek in a sleep, too often hindered by cold, forgetfulness of the hunger that gnawed their vitals during the day.

There were forty persons to feed, and no food, and no money. Nothing, in fact, but a miserable pension that was often delayed in the payment. This fearful want did not for one moment relax Blessed de la Salle's charity. Although his own family wanted bread, the doors were never closed against those who knocked for help. Strangers came, asking to be received into the Institute.

The holy man admitted them the moment he recognized the first signs of a true vocation. Many of them did not persevere; after a few months, they found the Rule too severe, the life too hard, and went away. Then the Brothers complained that these intruders had come to eat up their scanty rations for nothing; but Blessed de la Salle would answer: "They have made a good retreat; that may help towards their salvation."

His constancy never failed, and Providence, while sustaining him, did not preserve him from the common scourge. One day, everything was used up, and there was not a crust of bread in the house; no money in the purse, and the baker refused credit. Blessed de la Salle then had recourse to God in prayer. As he came out to say mass, he met a charitable person who asked him where he was going: "I am going to say mass," he replied, "and pray to God to send us food for the community to-day, for we have nothing to eat, and nothing wherewith to buy food."

"Go in peace," replied the other; "I will provide it all." And he at once went with ten crowns to the Community, thus relieving them of their distress.

Such traits abound in the history of all religious houses. God lets them go to the very brink of destitution, and then holds out His hand and prevents them from sinking. Thus do mothers act when teaching their children to walk. A leading string is holding them from behind; they don't see it, and they fancy themselves alone; but if their foot stumbles, the string holds them up, and prevents their falling. And are we not all of us like children whose steps, tottering in the path of duty, need the vigilance of God to teach us to walk straight? If His hand is always holding us up, we grow negligent and cowardly; if He draws it away, we fall. What we lack is confidence.

Blessed de la Salle had attained to this virtue of abandonment, and no trial could now make him waver. Sickness followed in the wake of famine. An epidemic of scurvy broke out in the house; the Brothers caught it. It is a contagious disease, often fatal, and is caused by want and bad food. Blessed de la Salle did not lose his serenity. He arranged an infirmary isolated from the rest of the house, put the patients there and deputed two Brothers to nurse them. Meantime, he was busy seeking remedies for them. The disease was raging in Paris, where there was a doctor very skilful

in treating it; but he was overrun; moreover, his visits and medicines cost very dear, and the holy man had no means of paying for them.

He went to see Helvetius, a Dutch doctor, whom he knew well, and who had taken care of him in more than one illness. He asked his advice, and Helvetius induced his colleague to attend the Brothers gratis. Blessed de la Salle put the sick Brothers into a coach, and carried them off to the doctor, who treated them, and cured them.

All things come to an end in this world, sorrows as well as joys. The epidemic disappeared with the winter. Abundance returned with the fine weather, and nothing remained to the Brothers of the misery they had undergone, but the merit of the patience with which they had borne it. But, for the servant of God, the cross never passed away; trials did not cease, they only changed.

Scarcely was one trial over, when another and heavier one began. In the month of December 1707, Blessed de la Salle was in a house in the Rue Saint Honoré, where he was being treated for a tumour in the knee, brought on by constant kneeling, when a young Abbé from Saint Calais, named Clement, asked to speak with him. On entering his presence, the young man fell at his knees, and implored his help in a pious undertaking that he had at heart. He had conceived the idea of educating boys from ten to twenty in order to teach them a trade, and form them to a Christian life. His father was rich, he said, and allowed him a pension of eight hundred francs, and he was waiting for a rich abbey that was to fall to him, and whose revenues he would devote to the development of his scheme. But meantime, he needed guidance and help. He had just been visiting the schools of the Rue Princesse, and learned there that M. de la Salle might afford him precisely the help he wanted, so he did not lose an hour in coming to see him.

We know how prudent Blessed de la Salle was in his decisions. He answered only a few words to his seemingly tempting and brilliant proposal. His own work, he said, had a distinct aim, and he could not deviate from this. If Abbé Clement's design fell in with its scope and purpose, he would not refuse his cooperation; but it was necessary, in the first instance, that the Abbé should make himself fully acquainted with the object of the Institute, and, with this intention, he gave him a prepared outline of its aim and its work to look over.

A few days later Abbé Clement came back, full of enthusiasm; he was delighted above all with the holy man's scheme for educating school-masters for the country. One and the same house, he said, could perfectly contain them and the young men that he himself purposed educating, and no time should be lost.

But Blessed de la Salle was in no hurry; he examined the matter, reflected over it, and let a year go by. Abbé Clement came to see him several times a week, sometimes alone, sometimes with his preceptor, Abbé Langoisseur, who approved of all he was doing; sometimes with a friend of M. de la Salle's, M. Rogier, who was delighted with the new project, and announced his intention of helping it on with all his influence. Letters followed visits, and in all these, Abbé Clement appeared loyal, charitable and full of ardor. Blessed de la Salle having expressed a fear lest he should after a while withdraw from the new work, and leave the burden of it on him, Abbé Clement replied by a letter full of assurances of devotedness and affection. Blessed de la Salle, before finally deciding, resolved to lay the affair before the Archbishop, who approved of it, and advised him concerning the situation of the new house. The prelate wished that the seminary for school-masters for the country should be in the country rather than in Paris. Abbé Clement ended by discovering at Saint Denis a house that suited perfectly. It belonged to a miss Poignant, sister of the one who had founded the school, and was at the present time let to the bailiff of Saint Denis. Abbé Clement visited it several times with his preceptor, found it suitable, discussed the terms of the sale with miss Poignant, and bought it for the sum of thirteen thousand francs. The contract was drawn up in October 1708.

Abbé Clement was the purchaser. It was he who bought the house, settled the price, and promised to pay. As, however, he was a minor of two and twenty, and feared his father's opposition, he wished the contract to be made out in M. Rogier's name. A portion, at least, of the amount had to be paid down to the proprietor. M. Rogier would not give the money. Abbé Clement had none at his disposal, so he begged Blessed de la Salle to advance first a sum of four thousand francs, and then another of twelve hundred francs. The holy man went to fetch some funds that he had given in keeping to a notary for the wants of the community, and handed the money to M. Rogier, who paid it in on account of the sum due for the house.

M. Rogier, however, refused to give the holy man a receipt, and Abbé Clement, fearing that the latter might lose his money, gave him an acknowledgment of five thousand two hundred francs.

Abbé Clement set about putting the house in order and organizing his work with a sort of feverish activity. The bailiff of Saint Denis was dismissed, and the seminary for the school-masters was installed by Easter 1709. Three young men who wanted to be school-masters in the country were the first inmates received. The Brothers were to teach them everything necessary, even plain-chaunt. The work seemed to open under excellent auspices.

But, meantime, the father of Abbé Clement had heard of his son's projects, and was not favorable to them. M. Rogier learned this, and, fearing the consequences, advised the young man to get rid of the house. Miss Poignant offered to take it back and return the money she had received; but Abbé Clement would not consent to this. A little later, M. Rogier found a good opportunity for selling it. Abbé Clement again refused. His father urged him to profit by his position as a minor to get rid of his engagements; but he indignantly rejected the proposal, saying he would never consent to defraud anybody.

Blessed de la Salle, in the interval, had undertaken a journey to Provence to visit the houses he had founded there. It was in February 1711. He was received everywhere by the Brothers with delight, by the Bishop with honor, by the people with enthusiasm, for these latter had come to appreciate the immense services his Institute was rendering to their children.

Suddenly, letters breathing anxiety began to arrive from Paris. His enemies had taken advantage of his absence to get up a charge against him, which was certain to ruin him and dishonor him at one fell blow. Abbé Clement had been won over to their side. He was not five and twenty when he bought the house, so he shielded himself under his minority in order to get the deed of sale invalidated, and at the same time to bring on M. de la Salle the odium of having suborned a minor. A petition in the name of Abbé Clement and his father was sent up to the civil lieutenant of Châtelet. The holy man was confounded by this audacity; but he did not complain. He disliked law-suits, and would not defend himself. However, as his honor was compromised in the affair, and the Brothers were liable to suffer on his account, he handed over all the documents,

Abbé Clement's letters, his acknowledgment, and a note of the affair drawn up in his own hand, to some persons whom he considered trustworthy, and whom he begged to see justice done him. Here again the servant of God was betrayed. His defenders were talked over, and gave judgment against him. When he returned to Paris, it was to hear that he was ruined.

On the 23rd of January 1712, Messrs Clement, father and son, petitioned the civil lieutenant of Châtelet for permission to summon M. de la Salle, and this was followed the same day by an order granting the desired permission.

On the 17th of February, letters of rescission from Chancery declared the deeds signed by Abbé Clement null and void, seeing that he had not attained his majority when he made the contract, and had not the necessary discernment to appreciate the consequences of his acts.

These letters were a mere formality and were never refused. To take effect, they needed to be confirmed by the judges, who could reject them if they had not a good legal basis. But Blessed de la Salle would not wait for the end of the suit. Seeing himself thus abandoned by every body, betrayed by those whom he had wholly trusted, unjustly dishonored, threatened with imprisonment, he saw nothing for it but to fly from persecution. He felt he had better hide himself from the world, and then perhaps its hatred would be disarmed. The Paris Brothers were already strengthened in their arduous vocation. The schools were flourishing and had won universal approval; when he was gone, there would be nothing to check their development. His humility took pleasure in this thought, for, while he was the founder and support of the Institute, he fancied himself its great obstacle. So he went away secretly, without saying where he was going, and, breaking off with every one, resolved not to let the world even hear of him again.

Before departing, however, he wished to secure the government of the Institute. Several Brothers were worthy to be charged with it; but none seemed to be so worthy as Brother Bartholomew. By his fidelity, his watchfulness, his gentleness, his firmness, his piety and discretion, he was calculated better than any one else to maintain order and the observance of the Rule. The mission that was confided to him was a very delicate one. Blessed de la Salle meant to hand over to him the substance of authority, but not the appearance

of it. He was to be Superior in reality, without bearing the title. If the servant of God had delegated his powers to him, he would have been obliged to tell him the motive of his departure, and the Brother, passing for his representative, would have been surrounded by the very same difficulties from which the holy man was flying.

By disappearing altogether, without leaving a successor, he seemed to leave the Institute to govern itself, and follow naturally in the way he had started it. The opposition that his direction of it had raised would fall of itself.

Blessed de la Salle had earnestly prayed for guidance as to what he should do; he had tried Brother Bartholomew, and found him faithful, and having confided his plan to him, and given him all necessary instructions, he quietly went away.

A few days afterwards, the Paris Brothers received two summonses, one in the name of Clement, the other in the name of Rogier; the first was dated February 20th, and sent by Messrs Clement, father and son. They demanded that the letters of rescission should be confirmed; that the promises and obligations of Abbé Clement should be declared null, and notably the acknowledgment of the five thousand two hundred francs. They claimed, moreover, the restitution of a sum of two thousand four hundred francs, which, they pretended, had been given by Abbé Clement to M. de la Salle and M. Rogier.

When M. Rogier saw his friend attacked and on the eve of being condemned, he also abandoned him, and went so far as to accuse him. In his summons of March 14th 1712, he asked to be put in possession of the house of Saint Denis, bought in by M. Rogier in the name of the holy man, who must now pay for it a second time if he wished to become the owner of it. He claimed indemnities also for the verdicts pronounced in favor of the two Clements, jointly with M. de la Salle. As we see, M. Rogier had gone over to the enemy, and done more than merely abandon M. de la Salle.

The absent are always in the wrong, and nowhere is the truth of this proverb made clearer than in law-suits. On the 4th of May and the 15th of June, judgment was given against Blessed de la Salle by default. In the verdict in favor of Clement, M. de la Salle was "forbidden to exact from infants in law such deeds or money." With one stroke, the holy man was ruined and disgraced by his friends.

Justice, it is true, overtook the culprits later. Abbé Clement suffered the penalty of his cowardice; he was condemned to the galleys for fraud against the State. M. Rogier was seized with remorse. When he died, his will contained a legacy of an income of three hundred and sixty francs bequeathed to Blessed de la Salle "from a conscientious motive." These last words are eloquently significant, and we will let them close the account of an incident in which the virtue of the servant of God was severely tested, and from which it came out beautiful and triumphant. The reparation came late; but the Saints know how to wait. As it has been said by an author of our time, "people are apt to say that evil triumphs in this world; but it is only because they do not look long enough."

It was from the South that consolation came to Blessed de la Salle. He arrived at Avignon towards the end of Lent 1712. Everything smiled on him, at first, and his journey was one long triumph. It seemed as if these people wanted to console him for all he had suffered in Paris. The Brothers kept him as long as they could. They wished to enjoy his presence to profit by his conversation, and, moreover, they dreaded the journey for him over the Cevennes, which were just then infested by robbers.

He left them, however, and reached Alais without accident. Providence had sent its angels to guard a life from which it expected to reap such a rich harvest yet. The Bishop of Alais received him with great honor, and spoke in high praise of the Brothers and their school. Since they had been settled in the town, the number of heretic children had sensibly diminished.

After a few days' stay, the holy man set off for Vans, passing by Gravières, whose prior was spiritual director of the Brothers of Vans. He was full of veneration for the holy founder whose virtues he saw reflected in the souls of his disciples, and he detained him as long as he could. In order to testify his esteem for him, he served Blessed de la Salle's mass in his surplice; but honors, as we know, were just the things to make his guest run away.

He arrived unexpectedly at Vans, where his presence caused great joy to the Brothers. In this little town, hid away in the mountains,

they never dreamed of receiving a visit from their father, whom they had not seen for years. He uplifted their courage; then, setting out by bad roads in a rigorous season, he reached Mende, where five years ago he had founded a school.

The Bishop who had received the Brothers then, M^r de Riancourt, had long been dead; but his successor had inherited his zeal and his devotion to the schools. He bore almost the same name as the holy man, without being any relation to him, and was called M^r Baglion de la Salle de Saillant. Full of esteem for the servant of God, against whom he had not yet been prejudiced, he wanted to receive him at his table; but Blessed de la Salle declined, alleging that it behoved him to set an example to his disciples of inflexible observance of the Rule.

After some time spent in this town, he returned to Vans, passing through Uzès, where he had business with the Bishop under whose jurisdiction the Brothers of Vans were. This prelate would not allow the Brothers to be moved about. He maintained that they did more good by remaining in the same place, where the children and the population knew them, than in running from town to town. This Rule was wise, but open to exceptions. Blessed de la Salle had no notion of moving the Brothers without reason; but he was master, and various causes might make it necessary to call away a Brother immediately without its being desirable to explain to him why. Without this right, the discipline of the Institute would be seriously compromised. The Bishop of Uzès understood these arguments, and promised Blessed de la Salle that he would extend his patronage to the Brothers of the town of Vans.

From Uzès Blessed de la Salle went to Marseilles, where his reputation had preceded him. The school opened there in 1706 was in a most prosperous condition. But, so far, it was the only one the Brothers had there, all the other schools being lay. Many eminent ecclesiastics and distinguished notabilities of the town hastened to pay their respects to Blessed de la Salle on his arrival. They congratulated him on his work, and manifested a most zealous desire to assist him in making new foundations.

It was suggested first that a second school should be opened in the town. The Bishop was anxious for it, and the matter was taken in hand by a zealous Jesuit Father who was preaching Lent in the parish of Saint Martin; he enlarged on the necessity of providing

free education for the children of the people, and the advantage there would be in securing the services of the Brothers, who were so experienced and skilful in that arduous work. The Jesuit's appeal had an immediate effect : money flowed in, and the school was on the point of being founded, when a curious circumstance checked the general impulse, and put a stop to everything. It was a Jesuit who had the merit of starting this good work, and the success was due to a Jesuit. But it so happened that the majority of the ecclesiastics who had become intimate with the holy man on his arrival in the town belonged to the Jansenists, and they hoped to draw him into the sect. He, simple and straightforward as a child, did not see through their scheme, but accepted their friendly overtures as disinterested, and had profited by them to do all the good he could; but when they saw him using the zeal of a Jesuit with the same confidence, they drew away in mistrust, and resolved to mar his project.

On the other hand, the parish-priest of Saint Martin, although he could not but esteem Blessed de la Salle, blamed the severity of his direction. The austerity of his life seemed to him a silent but living reproach to priests living in the world, and he would rather have had the school kept by ecclesiastics who, in their free hours, might have assisted the clergy of the parish; so he worked secretly in this direction.

He went to the benefactors, advised them to give their money elsewhere, and, as he was very plausible, he easily persuaded them.

The Bishop was next circumvented. He held to the Brothers, but he was assured that the charitable persons who wished to establish the school were resolved to take back their money if the school was to be directed by the Brothers. The Bishop could not understand the reason of this sudden change; but, fearing to let the foundation fall through, he refrained from interfering. He was, as yet, new to the diocese, and was anxious to keep well with every body. This Bishop of Marseilles was M^{sr} Belzunce, whose name we have had occasion to mention, and who signalized himself by his devotion and his charity during the plague of 1720. He honored Blessed de la Salle highly, and granted him extensive faculties for his whole diocese, in December 12th 1712. The plot was, however, so skilfully managed, that the school was not given to the Brothers, and those

who had set the intrigue on foot then came with doleful faces to inform Blessed de la Salle of the result.

He answered with his usual serenity : “ Blessed be God, since, apparently, He so wished it. ” He welcomed those who brought him this bad news, thanked them for the regret they seemed to feel, and went to the chapel to give thanks before the altar and adore the designs of Providence who, doubtless on account of his sins, had not allowed the school to be founded.

Blessed de la Salle had formed another project of far greater importance for the Institute : this was to found at Marseilles a Novitiate which would be a sort of nursery to furnish Brothers to the whole of Provence. The language spoken there was not the same as that spoken in Paris; the use of French was not yet universal. Moreover, the Novitiate of Saint Yon was very far away, and barely sufficed for the schools in the midst of which it was situated. Marseilles was a rich and pious town, and served as a passage to numbers of pilgrims going to Rome and coming back. It ought to be easy, he thought, to find the necessary funds amongst the multitude of persons whose piety led them that way, and also to meet with vocations which were likely to develop in face of a work so calculated to stimulate the zeal and charity of Christians. Blessed de la Salle confided his hopes to Brother Drolin, and already reckoned on this foundation to send him a companion¹. “ It will be difficult for me, ” he writes to him in July 1712, “ to send you a Brother until I have started the Novitiate in this country. I am just about to begin it; they want to have people of the country on account of the language being different to that of France. ”

Blessed de la Salle also wished this Novitiate to be a place of retirement where the Brothers could come from time to time to renew their fervor, and excite themselves to a more rigorous observance of the Rule. He had seen at Vaugirard the advantage of such an institution; but Paris was too far off, and journeys were too expensive to make it possible for the Brothers who lived in the South to come there. Moreover, the holy man had no longer any links with Paris; he looked upon the masters there as lost to him, and although he had retained the remote direction of Saint Yon, he could not think of sending the Brothers from Provence there.

¹ Archives of the Institute. Letter n° 3.

There were, consequently, many solid reasons for founding a Novitiate at Marseilles, and when the servant of God had thought the matter over, he mentioned it to several persons with whom he was acquainted, and all heartily approved of it; not only did they approve of it, but they set to work at once to help him to carry out the plan. Some gave sums of money, others subscriptions, the parish-priest of the town took it up, the Bishop promised his protection, a house was found, hired, furnished, novices presented themselves, and the Novitiate was installed towards the month of September 1712. It seemed as if the new friends of the holy man had no other care but to further his designs, for they gave up every other work to devote themselves to this one.

Blessed de la Salle was delighted at this extraordinary success, but he was also surprised at it, for he did not recognize in it the ordinary mark of God's blessing on a work. Hitherto, all his undertakings had been realized amidst contradictions and obstacles. They were raised on the foundation of the cross. By what prodigy was this law now reversed, and how came it that a Christian work found so many ready to forward it? The holy founder was not obliged to solve this riddle, and while making ready in his heart for a sudden reverse of the wheel of fortune, he applied himself with great activity to profiting by the opportunity of the moment. His first care was the forming of the novices. He took up his abode in their house, lived with them, and initiated them into the secrets of Christian life. He did, in fact, what he had already done so successfully at Vaugirard and at Saint Yon. He wished, moreover, that the Brothers who taught in the schools of Marseilles should come every day during their intervals of leisure to warm themselves at his glowing hearth, and learn there habits of regularity and discipline.

Meantime, the servant of God had become more and more an object of suspicion to the Jansenists, who were anxious to find out exactly what his views were. They surrounded him with the closest attentions; they tried to elicit his opinions, employing alternatively caresses and threats to induce him to commit himself. If, they said, he became their ally, they would place all their resources at the disposal of his institute; they would found schools everywhere, find friends and protectors for him all over the kingdom, and get him the entire youth of France to educate. They went so far as to

promise to get him made Bishop. If, on the contrary, he stood against them, they had influence enough to crush his work.

It was thus that Satan did when he transported Christ to the top of the mountain; he said to Him: "I will give thee all the kingdoms of the earth, if thou wilt fall down and adore me." Like his master, Blessed de la Salle resisted the tempter, and refused to betray truth, whatever were to be the reward.

The Jansenists held conferences, and invited him to assist at them. Before he had found out their intrigues, he had promised to go; but he was astounded at what he heard.

So long as they spoke of God, their language was irreproachable; but when they touched on the Pope, on grace, on relaxed morality, their tone changed. Pride and anger took the place of faith, and heresy was visible in all its hideousness. Blessed de la Salle had always been very devoted to the Holy See; he had never given into the new opinions, and had even preferred to lose the favor of the Archbishop in Paris rather than have anything whatever to say to them. He was not going to change his principles at Marseilles. He began by observing a stern silence on hearing these discourses. Pressed to say what he thought, he spoke with moderation, but with firmness. He upheld the persons and the truths that were attacked, and ended by saying that violent discussions were productive of no good, that the right cause had nothing to gain, and charity everything to lose by them. Several meetings led to the same result. The Jansenists saw that they could not hope to win over the servant of God, so from that moment they resolved to destroy him.

When people are seeking an opportunity to injure any one, the opportunity is soon found. Blessed de la Salle had arranged that the teaching Brothers were to come every day to the Novitiate to follow the spiritual exercises. These Religious after a while grew tired of the regular discipline imposed on them by their Superior. Not venturing openly to disobey him, they bethought themselves of having recourse to the benefactors of the foundation to get dispensed from this daily attendance. They alleged that the schools suffered from it. Moreover, they themselves were masters, and no longer novices. These exercises were, therefore, not necessary for them, while they obliged them to go several times a day from the school to the Novitiate, to the grievous prejudice of the children to whom they wanted to devote their whole time.

These arguments were childish. The holy founder of the schools had no notion of harming the children, seeing that their good was his supreme preoccupation; but he knew that it was zeal, not time that the masters lacked. It was not time lost, the hour that was given to uplifting their courage and forming them for their responsible duties. Moreover, the servant of God was always careful to choose the moment when the class was over, and their absence could not interfere with the duties of the day. This hypocritical behaviour of the Brothers made its impression on the patrons of the school, who at once requested that they should be dispensed from the exercises of the Novitiate. Such a request was equivalent to an order, and Blessed de la Salle was compelled to yield, though not without inwardly mourning over this blow dealt at his authority.

The complaints did not end here. The rebellious Brothers, in order to justify their grumbling, insinuated that the Novitiate was doing great harm to the school, that Blessed de la Salle was pouring into it all the money destined for the school, while he left the latter barely enough to subsist on. The Novitiate itself, moreover, they alleged, was badly directed, M. de la Salle being a harsh and very odd man; he was crushing the novices under the weight of an intolerable Rule, and as he was obstinate and wilful, there was no obtaining from him either concession or dispensation.

These calumnies were spread abroad, and were cordially welcomed and propagated by the enemies of the holy man. His conduct being unassailable, they accused him of being over-virtuous. These ferocious Jansenists, these enemies of relaxed morality, belying their own principle, blamed his austerity.

All that they had hitherto praised now became the subject of their ridicule and censure. The modest demeanour of the Brothers was now "a cowed look that reflected the slavery of their souls." Not satisfied with spreading these reproaches in the town, so as to dry up the source of the alms on which the foundation lived, the enemies of the man of God carried them into the heart of the Novitiate itself, in order to sow rebellion and discontent there.

In all religious houses, there are to be found men of weak character, quick to murmur, and eager to accept the seeming pity which some people extend to them on account of the life they have embraced. The novices, finding themselves pitied, thought they must be unhappy. A few of them left, and, to excuse their deser-

tion, exaggerated the austerity of the life. The zeal of the benefactors was not proof against all these attacks. Some gave less, others stopped their alms altogether, and want began to make itself felt in the Community.

The enemies of Blessed de la Salle, seeing his work shaken, thought the moment was come to strike the last blow. They published an infamous libel in which was set forth everything that calumny had invented against him. This production was spread in all directions, and the public, as usual, opened its ears to the evil, and shut them when the accused tried to defend himself. For the holy man, feeling the power of his adversaries and the injustice of their attacks, had published a defence in which, without infringing the lines of perfect charity, he proved clearly the falsehood of the charges brought against him. No one read him, no one believed him, and falsehood went on its way.

The Novitiate began to lack subjects. The firmest Brothers were shaken in their trust. Everyone was turning against their Superior : he must be guilty, for he alone could not be right and everyone else wrong. The other schools of Provence felt the countershock of this formidable attack. Blessed de la Salle had been through them all, and had reformed abuses, and established perfect discipline in them ; but reformed abuses leave behind them a virus of discontent which it is often difficult to get rid of ; all those who had been censured or corrected made common cause with the holy man's enemies. They began to murmur against him, and to ask what he meant, this importunate reformer who came to give trouble, and leave disorder in his wake. Before he came, the schools were flourishing and developing admirably ; he had only come to destroy and to disedify. The two Brothers of Marseilles were the leaders of this mutiny. They were stirring up animosity against the servant of God, and striving to compel him to leave the town.

His first movement was to fly to God to take his part against the injustice of men ; he went into retreat, and sought in prayer and penance the consolation he found nowhere else, but even this humility was turned against him. He was accused of abandoning his Institute. At last, he resolved to bow to the storm, and go away to Rome. Brother Drolin had been there for ten years, trying to make a foundation, and to have a school under the direction of the Pope. He had succeeded after endless difficulties ; he was alone, and Bless-

ed de la Salle's presence might be of great use to him as well as to the entire Institute; moreover, his piety inclined greatly to the journey. He longed to pray on the tombs of the Apostles, to offer up his sufferings there where the martyrs had suffered, and to seek light for his guidance at that great centre of light whose rays illuminated the whole Christian world. Since he was driven out of Paris, momentarily useless to his Brothers, and had been led by Providence to a town which was only separated from Rome by a few days' journey, the opportunity was favorable, and he felt he ought to take advantage of it. He engaged his place on board a ship, chose a Brother to accompany him, bought the necessary provisions, and waited till a fair wind should enable the ship to set sail. The voyage would rest him after his long spell of trouble.

In all his plans, Blessed de la Salle kept himself under the hand of God, trying always to maintain his heart in that perfect indifference which accepts with joy all the events that Providence sends. The ship was going to sail, and nearly all the passengers had gone on board. The servant of God was on his way thither also, when he met the Bishop of Marseilles, who begged him to give up the voyage; he meant, he said, to give him a school in the parish of Notre Dame-des-Acoules. Cheerfully, without a murmur, the holy priest obeyed, went back to the house, and in answer to the astonished Brothers, exclaimed: "God be praised! Here I am back from Rome. It is not His will that I should go. He is going to employ me at other work."

He then wrote to Brother Drolin these simple words: "I should have dearly liked, my dear Brother, to go and see you, and I was near going. But a matter has come to my hand here which delays my voyage, for it is urgent; and yet it has not succeeded."

And so it fell out; the school of Notre Dame-des-Acoules was not founded then, owing to the ill-will of the holy man's enemies.

The trials of the Saints, and the difficulty of doing good are the grand argument of unbelievers. And yet it hardly needs faith to explain it away; reason alone suffices. The current of the world is evil. Everyone is seeking his own interests and pleasures at the cost of his neighbors. God is forgotten by the crowd, and to the Christian this world looks like an immense workshop where men are working away with all their might to invent sin. If one of them breaks off from the general work, and announces that he is

going to do the contrary of what they have all been doing up to then, is it surprising that he should be cried down and contradicted? His example condemns the others, his presence becomes a hindrance, his work interferes with theirs, and paralyses it. They are at once enemies, and the strife begins; it never ceases, and as the deserter is alone, he is for a long time the weakest, and is at first knocked down.

Then it is that narrow minds are scandalized. They ask if, in truth, God interferes in the affairs of this world, since it is so hard to do good here, or if events are not the result of fatality, of human will, crossed now and then by some strange coincidences which superstition interprets as a Divine action. These conclusions are, however, only the result of superficial observation, or short-sightedness. The action of Providence is real, universal, unceasing, and always visible to those who look for it. Because, forsooth, we cannot read, does that prove that there are no books? Our vision is too bounded to embrace in their unity the designs of God in the world. They are a half revealed poem of which we can only see fragments. Many dramas are begun in the mystery of conscience where no human eye can penetrate; when they burst on the public gaze, there has already been enacted a long series of invisible facts of which the visible result is but the culmination. Like those stars that come we know not whence, and shine a moment, and disappear, they flash across the visible atmosphere of history, and finish after us, far from us, in depths where our gaze cannot follow. How could we reconstitute a single life, and how much less understand the inextricable tangle of those millions of lives that succeed and cross one another, all serving the glory of God, sometimes in spite of themselves?

We see, nevertheless, enough to understand, at least, the existence of that wondrous design whose beauty we shall never be permitted to see in this world. Let us, instead of prying curiously into the world around us, turn our gaze within ourselves, and recall the series of events that have made up our life, and we shall recognize how wise and kind was the Will that directed them!— The past grows clear to us, because, seeing it from a distance, we embrace the whole better. How many things have seemed utterly incomprehensible, things against which our will revolted while they were being accomplished, but which we can now see were essential links

in our moral progress, the sole aim of all our efforts. And yet we do not understand all. At every step, we come upon a mystery.

Seeing all his undertakings thwarted, Blessed de la Salle felt weariness and sadness invade his soul, and he began to doubt whether his work was acceptable to God, or whether he was the instrument designed for its accomplishment. He left Marseilles, having confided the Novitiate to Brother Timothy, a most pious man, who, after Brother Bartholomew, was destined to govern the Institute. The servant of God withdrew to the hermitage of Saint Maxinin, a solitude in the bosom of the mountains, some ten leagues from the town. Here, he redoubled his prayers and penances, that God might carry him through his trials, and enlighten him how to act. But the consolation he sought was denied him. His soul remained clouded in darkness, his heart, once so ardent, was cold, and heaven seemed deaf to his cries. The Saints have these hours of anguish, when God and men forsake them, and, alone with their weakness and their sins, wherever they turn, they see themselves abandoned. Our Lord Himself, their master and model, passed through this trial, and had His night of agony on the mount of Olives. Blessed de la Salle continued to pray, and his prayer, pure from all taint of self, only rose the higher in the eyes of Him who judges men not by what they feel, but by what they do.

And so the days passed. The enemies of the holy man, who, while he was there, accused him of misgoverning the Institute, accused him of abandoning it when he made up his mind to go away. One accusation was as unjust as the other. He did not forsake the Brothers, but believed he could no longer help them except by praying for them. "I am persuaded," he said, "that my absence may calm my enemies, and inspire them with kind thoughts for my dear children."

And with this belief, he resolved to go still farther away, and to retire to Mende, where, on his way, he had met with such an affectionate welcome. He set out, tramping on foot, like a pilgrim, over the forty-six leagues that separate Marseilles from Mende, and only spending during the whole journey seven francs and ten cents. He hoped to be received there as on his former visit.

There happened to be at Mende a pious person named M^{lle} de Saint Denis, rich and of good position, who had devoted herself

wholly to the education of heretic children. She had drawn round her a number of other ladies, and they had formed themselves into a community called "The United Ones."

M^{lle} de Saint Denis, having heard of the arrival of Blessed de la Salle, sought out the holy man, got ready a lodging for him, provided for his necessities, and even offered to take charge of his maintenance, if he would consent to stay at Mende for the rest of his life, and direct her little community. The servant of God did not accept the offer. He felt himself called elsewhere, and bound to finish the work he had begun so laboriously, and over which he had already shed such abundant tears. He only stayed two months at Mende, but he took advantage of his sojourn there to direct M^{lle} de Saint Denis, and give her a Rule for her community.

While he was at Mende, there arrived to see him that Brother Timothy whom he had left in charge of the Novitiate at Marseilles. The persecution had not come to an end with the departure of the holy founder. His enemies were bent upon completing the ruin of his work; they had checked vocations, dried up the fountain of alms, and the house had been closed. Brother Timothy then set out to find his superior. On arriving at Mende, he fell at Blessed de la Salle's feet, and with many tears told him all that had happened at Marseilles since his departure, and implored him to return and resume the government of the Institute. The servant of God was amazed to find that he was still remembered and wanted. "Why have you come to trouble my joy?" he said. "I am so happy in my retreat, that I am resolved to condemn myself to an eternal silence." Brother Timothy replied that he was necessary to his children. "How can you say that?" retorted the man of God; "do you not know how incompetent I am to govern others? Do you not know that there are many amongst you who will not have me for their Superior? And they are quite right; I am unfit for the position."

Brother Timothy pleaded in vain, Blessed de la Salle was inexorable.



Blessed de la Salle teaching school at Grenoble.

CHAPTER XIV.

GRENOBLE AND THE GRANDE-CHARTREUSE (1713-1714).

AFTER spending two months at Mende, Blessed de la Salle went to Grenoble, where he arrived in October 1713. There the Brothers, who were firmly attached to their Rule and full of veneration for him, received him with open arms. He enjoyed great peace amongst them, forgetting men and forgotten of them, and commending his work to God in prayer.

His life was divided between meditation and the practice of the Rule. Retired within a narrow cell at the top of the house, he spent his days and part of his nights in prayer.

In the heart of the mountains, about a day's journey from Grenoble, there lies hid away a famous monastery where men bury themselves alive in eternal silence. At that time, especially, they were separated from the world by dense and impenetrable forests accessible only to wild beasts. During three-fourths of the year the snow lies like a pall over their abode. The severity of the climate keeps every one away from the place, so they are left there unmolested. How do they spend their time in this solitude? They pray and they do penance. Their ardent prayer is rising day and night

to heaven like purest incense, and spreads a veil before the eyes of Divine mercy, hiding the sinfulness that never prays, and drawing down upon earth the benedictions of heaven. Their penance, borne by the hands of Angels, weighs down the scales of Divine justice against the iniquities of princes and of peoples, and disarms the anger of the Most High. They are the lightening-conductors of our moral life, and their souls, always lifted up to heaven, prevent the thunder-bolt from falling on us. And yet the world forgets them, or remembers them only to mock at them; but this very ingratitude forms part of their merit. They love nothing of the world, and care nought for the things it honors. On a certain day, a ray of Divine light revealed to them the nothingness of the good of this world, and they straightway left parents, friends, honors, fortune, all, to serve Jesus Christ, and practice Evangelical perfection.

St Bruno was their founder. Like our holy man, he was a Canon of Rheims, and, like him, he left the canonry to embrace a life of prayer and penance; but, happier than Blessed de la Salle, he had been permitted to follow his attraction for silence and solitude. M. de la Salle could not pass through Grenoble without going to venerate the places sanctified by the presence of this illustrious penitent. He went there in January 1714, and, at the end of nearly a century, the recollection of his extraordinary piety was still preserved there.

He did not let it be known who he was; he feared the honors that might be paid to him because of his former title, and forbade the Brothers who accompanied him to pronounce his name. All he wanted was to seek food for his devotion, in venerating the place made illustrious by the virtue of St Bruno, and above all the desert where he had dwelt remote from men and so close to God. He envied the lot of St Bruno, and went from place to place shedding tears, and edifying even those heroic souls so accustomed to the perfection of the Saints. The prior of the monastery, seeing his great love for the hermit's life, invited him to stay and abide there. Without knowing his name, they detected in him a great servant of God. But the holy founder was called elsewhere, and was destined to find rest only in God. He, therefore, tore himself away in spite of the longing he felt towards this silent life, and, after three days passed in this heavenly spot, he returned to Grenoble, and endeavoured to create for himself in the busy town such a solitude as he

had envied the disciples of St Bruno. He passed his days and nights in his humble cell, almost always in prayer, and giving to the affairs of this world barely the time that necessity demanded.

The Saints have always done this. Those whose life seems wholly given up to active work, find long hours to devote to prayer. Their existence is a continual communion with God, and prayer is, so to speak, the breath of their soul. At every moment they withdraw into God, finding in Him the light they need for every difficulty, the strength to resist all their enemies, the consolation which lifts them above trial, the constancy they need to persevere in all their undertakings. It is to this the Saints owe that peculiar clear-sightedness which enables them to see all that is required for their work, and that firmness with which they go on straight to their aim. These qualities are not of man, who is wavering and weak; but a man of prayer is no longer a man; God is in him and fills the frail vessel with virtues that seem to be already of eternity. This is how humble priests, poor Religious, who but for prayer would have gone through the world without leaving a trace in it, have, thanks to prayer, carried out undertakings far beyond their strength. It was not their doing, but that of Jesus Christ dwelling in them.

Blessed de la Salle was a man of prayer. At Rheims, in Paris, at Marseilles, at Grenoble, at Saint Yon, he gave the greater part of his days and nights to prayer. His enemies accused him of neglecting his Institute, but he was never better occupied in serving it than in these hours of communion with God. He drew from prayer that marvellous wisdom which enabled him to found a difficult work which so many men had attempted in vain before him. Prayer, moreover, does not diminish a man's time; it rather increases it. On coming from prayer, he sees clearer, and decides more rapidly; difficulties that he would have struggled against unsuccessfully, disappear of themselves; he accomplishes more in less time.

Blessed de la Salle did not neglect his Institute. Order had resumed its reign in the houses of Provence, and Brother Timothy had been named visitor to them. He sent one of the Brothers of the Saint Laurent school, of Grenoble, to carry his instructions to other houses, and in the meantime he took his place humbly in the school, going assiduously to his class, like the lowliest of the Brothers, teaching *a, b, c*, to the tiny children, reading and writing to the older ones, and the rudiments of Christian doctrine to all. Nothing

could tire out his patience; his gentleness overcame the most unmanageable tempers, and his perseverance forced the dullest to take in his lessons. He was, in fact, what he wanted his disciples to be, and he presented to them the most perfect model of the master of a Christian school. He would not have himself dispensed from any of the duties. Every morning, he conducted the children, walking two and two, to church, and made them take their places; then he went up to the altar, and celebrated mass with such piety and recollection, that he came to be known in the town as "the holy priest."

From the moment of his arrival, he took care to remain unknown. He neither paid nor received any visits. He had come to seek retirement and rest, and nothing but the necessity of teaching in the school would have drawn him out of his cell. As soon as the Brother whom he was replacing had returned from his mission, the servant of God crept back into his cell, and plunged again into prayer and meditation. He devoted his leisure to revising his works, and brought out a third and corrected edition of his book "Duties of the Christian."

Just as he had completed this task, he fell seriously ill. The rheumatism which he had suffered so severely from twenty years before, again attacked him. He treated it with contempt, would relax nothing of his customary austerities, and the result was that the malady became violent. He was obliged to lie down, and every limb was nailed to his bed by intolerable sufferings. Fever set in, and his life was feared for. The pious persons who had come to know him trembled lest he was going to be taken from them, and the Brothers in despair gathered round him, lavishing the tenderest care on so dear a life. He alone remained undisturbed. He consoled every one, bearing his pains with patience, and repeating those words of holy Job: "May God be blessed, and may His holy will be done, not ours! If we receive health at His hands, it is reasonable that we should also accept sickness from Him. May His holy name be eternally blessed!"

But the remedies applied took no effect, and the malady held on. It became necessary to have recourse to a treatment that was more painful than the disease itself, and which had formerly given him relief in Paris. The holy patient overcame the shrinkings of nature. His disease prevented him from being of any use to the

Brothers, and from fulfilling his religious exercises, and, therefore, he held to recovering the use of his limbs. So he allowed himself to be again stretched out naked on a sort of grid-iron under which was lighted an ardent fire that seemed to burn his flesh through. Not a murmur escaped him. After some days of this heroic treatment, he was again relieved. He was at first too weak to go up to the altar, and celebrate his daily mass, so he compensated himself by saying his beads several times a day, and in keeping his soul constantly united to God. His strength returned by degrees, and as soon as he was able to walk, he went to the little chapel close by in the hospital of the Cistercian Monks of Grenoble. The moment he was well, he determined to make a long retreat to repair what he called his losses, that is to say, the forced omission of his religious practices during his illness. The Abbot of Saléon invited him to make this retreat at Permeigne.

Parménie, in the country dialect Permeigne, is the name of a hill some seven leagues to the north-west of Grenoble, on the right bank of the Isère. This hill, steep as a wall on every side, is crowned by a wooded plain of five hundred feet long and forty wide. From this table, you see the whole of the rich valley of Grésivaudan. At its base are numerous towns and villages— Izeaux to the west, Beaucroissant to the north, Renage to the east, Tullins to the south; but the roads are very rough, and when the snow is on the ground, the solitude of Permeigne is almost inaccessible.

The history of this spot is very ancient. In the seventh century, the Archbishops of Vienne had a fortified castle there. Towards 650, Ramnold, Bishop of Grenoble, flying from the Sarracens, who were laying waste Dauphiny, took refuge there, and the Bishops of Grenoble, when driven from their see, were long compelled to seek shelter there from the hordes of barbarians who were over-running the Rhone and its tributaries. Close to their castle, they built a chapel that was served by twelve Canons regular under the title of the Holy Cross; such was the origin of Permeigne. The inhabitants of the neighborhood used to come to pray at the shrine which had often served them as a place of refuge. In 1259, Faucon, Bishop of Grenoble, who had a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, removed the Canons of Permeigne, and replaced them by some Cistercian Nuns from the convent of Prémol, who founded a monastery of their order there. One of them, Beatrice d'Ornacieux, died soon

after in odour of sanctity, and her relics remained at Permeigne.

In 1400, the soldiery of Louis de Châlon overran the country, sowing death and ruin on their path. The Nuns were terrified, and fled, and their monastery was burned down. Worship ceased to be offered up there, and for several centuries the sanctuary, so long held in veneration, was abandoned. Ruined alike by the hand of time and of man, it now only was frequented at long intervals by a few pilgrims who kept alive in their hearts reverence for the tradition of their ancestors' pilgrimage to the old shrine.

In 1646, in a little neighboring parish, a child was born who was destined to rebuild the deserted sanctuary. Louise Hours was the daughter of poor peasants who were in the service of the comte de Ferrière; her father was game-keeper, and her mother house-keeper at the castle. She was born almost dead; but her mother consecrated her to the Blessed Virgin, asking as her solitary petition that the child might receive baptism. Our Lady accepted the vow, granted the poor mother more even than she asked, for the child lived.

The little creature was brought up as most children of the people were brought up in those days, especially in the countries where war had made havoc of everything. She got no teaching of any sort, did not learn even the first rudiments of Christian doctrine, and spent her childhood keeping flocks in the meadows and woods, and on the mountain of Permeigne, at the foot of which her parents lived. But God was whispering to her soul, and inspiring her with a great desire to know and serve Him. At the age of fourteen, being very anxious to learn, she entered the service of a well-to-do family of Rives, where she made acquaintance with a venerable priest who taught her the catechism. She stayed there two years, and then came home to her mother, now a widow, and to her young sister, and taught them all she had learned. She resumed her humble occupation of a shepherdess, refusing many offers of marriage, and seeking only solitude, that she might be nearer to God. She meditated on the infancy and the passion of Our Saviour, practised meditation and penance, and made great strides in the way of perfection. Although she was quite alone, she made vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience; she cut off her hair, and dressed herself in black with a white cap, which she never afterwards left off. One day, when in prayer, the inspiration came to her to re-

build the sanctuary of Permeigne. She confided the idea to several pious persons who all encouraged it, especially an Ursuline Nun of Saint Marcellin, mother Bon, a soul of great holiness, who sustained and directed her. It was a difficult undertaking. A great deal of money would be required, and Louise had nothing. The consent of the Bishop of Grenoble was also necessary, and he, considering the magnitude of the work and the weakness of the person about to undertake it, was inclined to treat her as a visionary. At last, however, he yielded, and Louise began to beg. A coin of two farthings that she found in the rubbish of Permeigne constituted her first funds. She went begging from door to door, and getting a great deal more abuse and bad treatment than alms. In the town of Tullins, which contained from four to five thousand communicants, she was only able to collect a hundred cents, and this meagre capital was dearly earned. One day it was the lord of the manor who called her a thief and vagabond, and had her hunted off the premises by his dogs. Another day, she was put in prison. Even calumny attacked her, and the purity of her life was suspected. But she did not lose heart; she begged at Grenoble, at Saint Marcellin, at Valence, even at Lyons, and got together a little money. Her zeal had rekindled the piety of the people towards their ancient shrine. Peasants and workmen came to offer their services. Some gave wood for the beams; others lent oxen and carts to transport it. So the work began, and heaven seemed to be favoring it in many signal ways. Louise toiled at it with her own hands. A little chapel was raised, and blessed by Abbé Canel in 1674, and soon after "Sister Louise" built herself a little hut of wood and boughs, where, in company with another young peasant girl, she lived, practising all the austerities of the monastic life. Without fire, feeding on broken fragments of black bread that shepherds or travellers gave her in charity, she came down from the mountain every morning to hear mass, and passed the rest of the day in prayer. The chapel was built, but it was too small, so Sister Louise went forth and begged again, and got more money, and it was enlarged. A chaplain was now wanted, and God enabled her to find one who consented to devote himself to the painful and humble mission.

But, meantime, the fame of Sister Louise's holiness had spread abroad, and people came from all directions to ask for her prayers and her counsel. She had extraordinary gifts; amongst others that

of discerning spirits; she had great lights for guiding souls, and even the secrets of the future were revealed to her. These wonderful faculties drew to the once deserted mountain crowds of people of all ages, and as the village was very far off, the pilgrims were exposed to all the inclemencies of the rigorous climate. Sister Louise, in order to shelter them, resolved to raise two buildings, one for the men, one for the women, with a little chapel. She went out anew and begged. But the Saints are not permitted to realize their holiest plans without many trials. Louise was arrested by order of the Archbishop of Lyons, and put in prison. She was not the least disturbed. She had foreseen her arrest, and she foretold her deliverance. And so it came to pass. The Archbishop soon after recognized her innocence, and had her set free, and to atone for the wrong he had done her, he gave her a large sum of money which sufficed amply to build the two houses she desired.

Sister Louise came back to her hermitage, and resumed her austerities and her prayers. The crowd continued to besiege the door of her lowly cell, and even priests did not think it beneath them to seek her advice, and place themselves under her direction. The Abbot of Saléon, with whom Blessed de la Salle was intimate, had a property on the mountain. Not far from the hermitage, he had a house and grounds, and had invited the servant of God to go there after his illness, for change and rest. Blessed de la Salle went, and stayed there part of February 1714, and took advantage of the opportunity to make acquaintance with Louise. These two souls at once understood each other, and a bond of strong spiritual friendship was quickly formed between them. Sister Louise's divinely illuminated eyes at once discovered the high perfection of the priest that God had sent her, and she opened her soul to him with entire confidence, told him the story of her life, and sought his counsel. She had not led the extraordinary life we know of without struggles of every kind. Demons came to assault her in her solitude, and, above all since the erection of the two houses of refuge, they attacked her with increased violence. Blessed de la Salle consoled her, supported her, and gave her advice the wisdom of which she recognized. He even condescended to tell her of the trials he had had to undergo, the battle he had been obliged to fight, and the doubts that had assailed his soul concerning his great undertaking. He longed to end his days in retirement, to consecrate to God alone

the remains of a life that men no longer cared for, and which in the world seemed perfectly barren; but Louise deterred him from this project. She foretold to him that he had still a great deal to do and to suffer, but that, in reward for his patience, he would receive a brilliant and everlasting crown. As to his love for solitude, he was not to give into it. "It is not God's will," she declared, "and you must not forsake the family He has given you; you are its father, and your lot is labor; you must persevere in that to the end of your days, uniting, as you have done from the first, the life of Martha with that of Mary."

While he was at Permeigne, Blessed de la Salle met M. Dulac de Montisambert, then four and twenty years of age, and who was to be known afterwards as Brother Ireneus, assistant to the Superior general of the Institute. Belonging to a noble family, and brought up strictly and in the love of God, the young man entered the army when a mere lad. At fourteen, he was lieutenant of the regiment of Saint Menehould. In the army, he fell under the influence of evil companionship, contracted a passion for gambling, and was led into all sorts of dissipation. He was severely wounded at the battle of Malplaquet, a bullet going right through him. The near presence of death converted him. He remained some time longer in the regiment, edifying his companions and his chiefs whom he had formerly scandalized, and leading an irreproachable life. Finally, at two and twenty, he resolved to devote himself wholly to the service of God, but without any idea so far of what direction he should take. He left the regiment secretly, sold his horse, and came to Grenoble, where he spent ten months nursing the sick in the hospitals, praying in the churches, and serving his apprenticeship to the perfect life. At the end of that time, he presented himself at the convent of the Capuchins, and begged to be admitted as a lay Brother. The Monks asked for his baptismal certificate and the written consent of his parents, and, as he could not produce either, they refused to receive him.

He then went to the Grande-Chartreuse. The Monks here were equally afraid of receiving him without the authorization of his family; they gave as an excuse for not admitting him that he did not know Latin, and so could not say the breviary.

Disheartened by these refusals, he thought of realizing a project he had long had at heart, which was to make a pilgrimage to Rome

and Loretto. He put on coarse garments, gave all his money to the poor, and with a staff in his hand set out on foot for Italy, asking alms, and leading the austere life of a real pilgrim. He visited all the places sanctified by the saints and martyrs, and returned to Grenoble more fervent than ever. But the long and painful journey had broken down his health; he fell ill; when he had recovered, he went to the Abbey of Sept-Fonts, of the order of Citeaux, in the diocese of Autun, and asked for admittance; but the Father Abbot refused him, saying that God was calling him elsewhere.

He came back to Grenoble, and made another pilgrimage. This time it was to Permeigne, where he made a retreat. The Abbot of Saléon was there at the time with Blessed de la Salle. The Chaplain of Permeigne, who confessed young Dulac, and was aware of his difficulties, presented him to the Abbot, who, edified by his fervor and his virtues, recommended him to the servant of God as a subject who might suit his Institute.

The holy founder first hesitated. He was afraid that his wandering life might indicate an inconstant disposition, and that the young man would not have the stability he exacted from the Brothers. He, therefore, put him to the test, and shut him up in a room, forbidding him to leave it. Young Dulac obeyed without a word, gave himself up to prayer, and remained shut up until the holy man came to let him out. Then, he fell at his feet, confided to him the longing he had to serve God in a Community, and implored him to admit him into the Institute. Blessed de la Salle, seeing his sincerity and the firmness of his resolution, consented without further hesitation.

The director of the Brothers of Grenoble, who happened to be at Permeigne, acquainted him in a few days with the Rule; he cut off his hair, gave him the name of Brother Ireneus, took him back to the town he had edified so long by his piety, and put him through the exercises of the Novitiate. Fifteen days afterwards, he sent him to direct a school at Avignon, thence to Paris, and finally to Saint Yon.

Blessed de la Salle had accepted as coming from God the advice of Louise, and acted upon it. He resolved to accept whatever new work was offered him. He stayed only fifteen days on the mountain, but he kept the remembrance of those days all his life, and continued to correspond with sister Louise by letters. She could

not read them herself, but she had them read to her, and answered them as God inspired her.

Blessed de la Salle returned to Grenoble, and celebrated with his Brothers the feast of St Joseph, 1714. The trials prophesied to him by Louise were not long in overtaking him. The constitution *Unigenitus*, which condemned the hundred and one propositions of Quesnel, had just been promulgated. At Grenoble, as in nearly all the dioceses of France, it was issued by the Bishop, who later on repented of his submission, and retracted.

As soon as the pontifical document was published, Blessed de la Salle wished to communicate it to his disciples. He read to them the Bull with the pastoral letter that accompanied it, explained the meaning of the condemned propositions, and recommended them to bow to the papal decision with absolute submission. He did not even stop here. He was a priest and a Doctor of Divinity, and a decree of the Church being attacked, he felt bound to defend it, and proclaim publicly his entire allegiance. He did this, and showed himself in season and out of season the inflexible adversary of the innovators. In private and in public, he attacked them without quarter. A pious lady of Grenoble having begged of him to examine her library, he perceived the “Moral Reflexions” of Quesnel on the shelves:— “What!” he cried, “you keep a book that the Church has forbidden and condemned! The anathema hurled at those who retain it does not frighten you? Has that book and the example of its author taught you to laugh at the thunders of the Church, and set you free from fear of them as from a childish fear?” The lady, full of confusion, excused herself on the ground of her ignorance, and handed the book to the holy man, who burned it.

The advice he gave to others he practised himself. In Paris, as soon as the Archbishop had condemned Quesnel’s book, before even judgment had been pronounced by the Holy See, Blessed de la Salle took it down from his library, and sent it to the parish-priest of Saint Sulpice, although, as a Doctor of Divinity, he might lawfully have kept it.

This zeal, which had exposed him to persecution at Marseilles, drew down new vexations upon him at Grenoble. The Jansenist party was powerful everywhere and was furious on seeing itself attacked with so much science and ability. It defended itself with

its customary arms, abuse and calumny, and spread the most outrageous reports concerning the holy man. Happily, his character at Grenoble was established beyond the reach of their poisonous shafts.

It was not the first time the servant of God testified his attachment to the Holy See. At Rouen, when his Novitiate was in dire distress, he refused a large sum of money offered him by an ecclesiastic on condition that he would join the party opposed to the Constitution. At Marseilles, again, as we know, he spurned the offer of the episcopal purple rather than betray his faith, and preferred to leave his Institute at the mercy of his powerful enemies. He acted in the same way at Grenoble, and continued to do so to the end.





Blessed de la Salle receiving Viaticum.

CHAPTER XV.

FRESH TROUBLES IN PARIS AND AT ROUEN (1714-1717).

It was about two years since Blessed de la Salle had left Paris ; but, while at a distance, he had kept himself informed of the affairs of the Institute, and, in certain exceptional cases, had interfered by his advice. He had kept up communication with Brother Bartholomew; with Brother Thomas, who resided at Saint Yon, and also with Brother Joseph, while he kept watch through Brother Timothy over the houses in the South. But his direction was naturally intermittent, and almost invisible. Very often the letters of the Brothers did not reach him, and when he received them, he did not always answer. Considering himself incapable of overcoming the opposition which had triumphed over him, he thought he could serve the Brothers better by prayer and penance, and he wanted to accustom them to do without him.

His enemies had taken advantage of his absence to sow discouragement in the Institute. They had spread the report that he had not been able to bear the Rule he had imposed on others, and that

this Rule was to be modified. A certain inevitable disorder had arisen during this prolonged absence of the Superior, and a sad experience has too often proved to all what becomes of a Religious Community when the Father is taken away.

Blessed de la Salle had gone without announcing his departure to any one but Brother Bartholomew. He had not named his successor, and the Brothers, knowing that he was alive, did not dare appoint one. Brother Bartholomew, master of novices in Paris, had a certain practical authority which was turned to account. He was regular, conciliating, beloved by all, and it was to him that every one had recourse when difficulties arose. But, not having any definite and constituted authority, he was often paralysed in his best intentions.

This was the moment chosen by the enemies of the servant of God to introduce into the Institute a change which they had been working at for ten years, and which he had always resisted. They represented to the Brothers that the government was really too heavy for one person, that M. de la Salle himself had not been able to retain it, that no single Brother was capable of taking up the succession, and that, consequently, the whole organization should be altered. In order to understand the disputed point, it became necessary to explain somewhat the spirit of the rules which the man of God had laid down.

His idea was that all the Brothers who were sent to teach in schools throughout France, and even all over the Christian world, were to form one family, who should have but one father, namely, the Superior; one paternal home, the Novitiate; one law, the Rule. All the Brothers, being called to the same functions, were to be trained by the same method; they were to receive the same teaching, practise the same virtues, imbibe the same spirit, and reproduce, as far as possible, the same type which was that of the founder. In order to realize this unity, they were not only to spend at least one year in the Novitiate, and be there, as it were, cast in the mould of the Institute, but they were to return from time to time and go back into this mould, so that the lines which had been rubbed off by contact with the world might be renewed, and resume their primitive accuracy. Thus the direction, begun during the first year's training, was continued through life. The Brothers wrote once a month to the Superior general; he answered them,

and by this means, as well as through the visitors and his own visitations, he remained in contact with them, and was able to follow all the changes in their soul, to encourage and direct their progress, to prevent or arrest abuses. But for this he was armed with a supreme authority. Every Brother who strayed from the Rule could be called back to the mother house, or sent elsewhere. Every budding evil could consequently be nipped the moment it was perceived. This constitution was simple, wise and strong. The best proof of its excellence is its duration. It has lasted for two centuries, with merely a few changes, which are in reality developments rather than changes, and everywhere the results have been admirable.

The Brothers were under the ecclesiastical authority. They were full of deference for the Bishops of the dioceses, and would never have opened a school in one without their permission; they were full of respect for the pastors, and sought their advice, their protection and support. But they were obliged to apply their Rule everywhere, whether for the keeping of their schools, or for their own government; and were forced to resist every influence that was set in motion to alter it. Their system had been carefully considered beforehand by men who had a genius for education and a particular grace for the direction of childhood and who were enlightened, moreover, by long experience, and the system they created certainly was superior to any that could be imagined as a substitute. Would it have been so if, in every town, the Brotherhood had adopted different customs? What one pastor did, his successor would have undone; traditions would have been lost, and endless abuses would have crept in which it would have been impossible to arrest. The Brothers, sent about from one diocese to another, would have carried their different ways with them, and this would have resulted in disorder and conflict. It would have been necessary to break the bond that united the houses one to another, to attach the Brothers perpetually to their separate schools, and emancipate them from the central authority in order to place them under the immediate direction of the diocesan and parochial authorities.

But, in that case, how were these houses to recruit subjects? Some dioceses yielded numerous vocations, others none, and the advantage of a single Novitiate was to supplement the unpro-

ductiveness of one district by the abundance of another. The greater number of the bishops intended to found schools in all their parishes. The council of Trent had ordered them to do so, and they felt the necessity of it. The obstacle came from the lack of masters. They had none, and they could not find men to train as masters. This was precisely what had caused the rapid development of the Institute founded by Blessed de la Salle.

Moreover, at this period, the clergy of France were divided. One set of dioceses was in revolt against the Holy See and carried away by the Jansenist party. If these dangerous heretics had succeeded in getting hold of the education of the people, they would have used their power by contaminating the popular classes, and inspiring them with hatred of the Sovereign Pontiff and contempt for the decisions of the Church.

Blessed de la Salle, who had all his life professed the most perfect allegiance to Rome, could not expose his children to this peril; knowing as he did by experience what it cost to withstand the intrigues of such adversaries, he did not choose that the Brothers should have the same warfare to carry on throughout all the schools in the kingdom.

And what was this constitution that certain persons, well-intentioned probably, wanted to substitute for his? "The Brothers in the various towns should have for superior a priest foreign to their Institute. Each house should be independent, and the Brothers should in each be stationary, without being able to be moved. To repair the losses made by death amongst them, two or three novices should be trained as they were wanted. The central Novitiate should be suppressed. The Paris Brothers should form a distinct society under the authority of an ecclesiastical superior chosen outside the society."

Such was the programme of the enemies of Blessed de la Salle, and it may be said with truth that one more diametrically opposed to his views could not have been devised.

This programme was concocted in Paris, apparently by M. de la Chétardie, parish-priest of Saint Sulpice, and by Abbé de Brou. The historians of the time do not name them, but circumstantial testimony does, and almost all the difficulties which the holy man encountered in Paris arose from his not being willing to bow to M. de la Chétardie's ideas. Many parish-priests were of M. de la

Chétardie's opinion. They had hitherto had entire charge of the charity-schools, and had had a great battle to fight against the precentor for their liberty. It seemed hard on them, after this strife of half a century, to lose what they had fought for, and succumb to a new order of things, composed of obscure, ignorant laymen, governed by a strange Canon. The Novitiate was in the parish of Saint Sulpice, and was consequently a charge upon it, without any apparent gain to the parish, whose alms had helped to train Brothers for all the schools of France.

These were specious reasons, and, without being sound, they were of a nature to influence minds not acquainted, as Blessed de la Salle was, with the real needs of education. The parish-priest of Saint Sulpice was convinced of their solidity, and defended them energetically. But whatever may have been the good qualities of M. de la Chétardie, as regards the direction of good works, we feel bound to accept the judgment given by the Abbot of la Trappe to the Abbot of Montigny, concerning the foundations of Father Barré—“ I am of opinion that, regarding those works that are of God, we cannot do better than follow the intentions of the founders. It is they who have received the spirit and the mission, and we must believe that it is by their ministry that God means to declare His will. So long as the first Rules were observed, things prospered, and received a particular blessing; God protected the works, He supported them, He increased them. But experience has taught us that as soon as they abandoned the views of the founders, and adopted other maxims, and struck out roads which had been unknown to these holy men, the holiest establishments degenerated and fell away. Human wisdom only spoiled what had been done, and what was only to subsist by His Divine Providence¹. ”

So long as Blessed de la Salle was in Paris, they had not been able to substitute new ideas for his Rule; but when he was at a distance, people resolved to take advantage of his absence to force them on Brother Bartholomew, and so introduce them into the Institute. This was no easy matter, however. Brother Bartholomew was strongly attached to the Rule; he knew, moreover, that he had but at transitory authority, and he wished to return intact to his superior the deposit he had received from him. Nothing could be

¹ *Maximes spirituelles*, of Father Barré. — Paris, 1694, in-8°.

obtained by force from so firm a character, so they tried cunning. They began by attacking the authority of Brother Bartholomew in all the Paris houses. The Brothers had no endowments and lived chiefly on the alms given them by the parish of Saint Sulpice. The Abbé de Brou, a virtuous priest, but who was imbued with the ideas of the pastor, was named by the Archbishop inspector of the schools. He went often to the house of the Brothers, meddled in everything, and, taking advantage of the power which the fact of his having control of the parish funds gave him, he exercised more authority than even Brother Bartholomew himself. He prevented him from receiving postulants, sent them away when he thought fit, and managed so well, that when the servant of God came back from the provinces, he only found three or four young men in the Novitiate.

In seeing M. de Brou invested with this authority, the Brothers grew accustomed to look on him as their Superior, and even addressed him as such, which he seemed to like. But a day came when this was not enough, and he demanded the title:— “ You call me your Superior, ” he said; “ that is all very well; but you must draw up a deed, and have it signed by the Brothers. ” The Brothers, however, had no right to do this. Their founder had not given in his resignation, and they knew that he was not dead. The Rule, besides, forbade their naming as Superior any one outside the Institute. They ought not to have yielded to this new demand; but they feared that all provision would be taken from them, and this made them weak. The name of the new Superior was accordingly inscribed on the register of the house, and remained there until, on the return of Blessed de la Salle, it was torn out.

Once in possession of his title, the new Superior grew bolder. He determined to make all the other houses follow the example of his own, and to break off all bond between it and them. He tried to persuade Brother Bartholomew that he was burdened with too heavy an office, that he was not capable of conducting so many scattered houses, that even M. de la Salle had broken down under the load. “ How then could Brother Bartholomew, who had neither the age nor the authority of the founder, be so presumptuous as to fancy he could do what his Superior had found it impossible to do? Brother Bartholomew’s humility would not permit him to answer these arguments, and probably in the bottom of his heart he did

find the load too heavy. He replied, however, that he could not on his own authority change the constitution of the Institute, that the Rule had been accepted by all the Brothers, and that all should be consulted before any change could be introduced. Those who were endeavouring to draw him into their nets advised him to write to the Brothers Directors of the various houses in the provinces, to beg of them to elect, all in their own place, an ecclesiastical Superior who would govern them in the absence of Blessed de la Salle, that, for his part, " he was not equal to it. " Brother Bartholomew wrote in this sense, and some of the Directors did as he desired them. At Rouen, Abbé Blain, the future historian of the society, was named by the Archbishop Superior of the community.

But this step had not the result that was expected from it. The majority of the Brothers perceived the danger of the new reform, and pointed it out to Brother Bartholomew. The ecclesiastical Superiors who had been chosen also perceived it. They were interested in the Brothers, and far from abusing the power that had been confided to them to dismember the Institute, they contented themselves with protecting it, leaving the Directors all the authority they had hitherto enjoyed. Even the Archbishop of Paris refused to modify the Rule. M. de la Chétardie and M. de Brou went to him, and presented him with a note they had drawn up of the changes they wanted made. The prelate had it looked into by his Vicar general, M. Vivant, kept it seven or eight months, and on the 4th of April 1714, sent word to Abbé de Brou that nothing was to be touched. At the same time, he expressed publicly his high regard for Blessed de la Salle.

Thanks to this wisdom, no disorders occurred. It is true that a few Brothers took advantage of the circumstance to leave the Institute. But most of them had long been wishing to do this, and were only waiting for an opportunity. Others were old, and attached to their Rule, and thought it was going to be changed; but, for all, it was a trial which they ought to have withstood. God, however, sometimes, permits the wind to shake a tree that is too heavily laden with fruit; those that are too ripe, or those that hardly hold on the branches, fall to the ground; those that remain, drinking up all the sap, grow finer and more succulent.

Blessed de la Salle was aware of all that had been going on. People had been writing to him from all sides, reproaching him

with his absence, and pointing out the disorder it was giving rise to. A few of these letters reached him; but he was not moved by them. His soul remained unshaken. He had adored in silence the unfathomable designs of God, and contented himself with saying:— “ God be praised! If it be His work, He will take care of it.” And, indeed, he soon received more favorable tidings. The disturbance was only on the surface, and the Institute was rather more firmly consolidated; nevertheless his return was more necessary than ever. The organization of the Institute, though it had withstood so many shocks, must eventually be weakened if his great influence and consummate experience did not come to the rescue.

Failing to conquer his resistance by their prayers, the Brothers of Paris, Versailles and Saint Denis hit upon a singular device; they resolved to send him a command to return, and accordingly wrote him the following letter:— “ Our dear Father, we, the principal Brothers of the Christian schools, having at heart the glory of God, the good of the Church and of our Institute, consider that it is of the utmost importance that you should resume the care and general guidance of the holy work of God, which is also your work, since it has pleased God to make use of you to establish and manage it so long. Every one is convinced that God has given you the grace and the ability necessary for governing the new Institute which is so useful in the Church, and it is only justice that we should testify that you have always governed it with great success and edification. This is why we humbly pray you, and further command you in the name and on behalf of the community to which you promised obedience, to immediately resume the general government of our society. We remain, with profound respect, your dear Father, your very humble and very obedient inferiors. In faith of which we sign. Given at Paris, 1st of April 1714.”

The moment had now come for Blessed de la Salle to return to his Brothers; and he no longer hesitated. He took leave of his friends, left Grenoble, stopped a few days at Lyons, studied there the work of M. Demia, went to Annecy to venerate the relics of St Francis de Sales, made a round of visitations to a certain number of houses, and then set his face towards Paris. Grave events had come to pass during his absence. The parish-priest of Saint Sulpice, M. de la Chétardie, had died on the 29th of June. He had been so unfortunate as not to understand the work of Blessed de la

Salle, and to remain hostile to it to the end of his life. But he was none the less a venerable priest, and his will is so admirable that it deserves to be quoted as a model of humility and faith :—

“ I commend myself to the prayers of the holy clergy and the men and women of the parish, entreating them to remember me before the Lord, and to forgive me if in any way I have offended against my duty to them... I declare that I have no gold or silver of my own... Whatever may be found in my house is a deposit confided to me, and which must be given to the charitable confraternities... As to my furniture, it is of very little value... Such are my last wishes in leaving this world, and I leave all without regret, except the Church of Jesus Christ, founded on the merits and mercies of God. I am going away, but I will return; I am going to sleep, but I will awake; I am dying, but I will rise again: I bear with me this sweet hope, and go down into the grave awaiting the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen. ”

Two days before his death, M. de la Chétardie resigned his presbytery into the hands of Cardinal d'Estrées, Abbot of Saint Germain, in favor of M. Languet de Gergy, his vicar, who took possession of it on June 21st. M. de Gergy knew Blessed de la Salle, and loved the charity-schools, where he had often taught the catechism. He had been for ten years vicar of M. de la Chétardie, and acquitted himself of his office with great zeal. He had even wanted to sell his patrimony to help the poor. The Brothers hoped therefore to find in him a protector as devoted as his predecessor.

Blessed de la Salle arrived in Paris on the 10th of August 1714. His first words on meeting the Brothers were :— “ Here I am; what do you want with me? ”

They entreated him to take the sole direction of the Institute. This he flatly refused to do. His great desire was that, during his life, the Brothers should establish a government according to their Rule, lest after his death one should be forced upon them which would change the basis of the Institute. Moreover, his great humility inclined him to fly from honors and power, and he sincerely believed that some one could easily be found who would govern the society better than he did. Then again he felt that he was growing old, and he wanted, like all holy souls, to break with the world in order to unite himself more closely to God.

These reasons were not likely to weigh with his disciples. They had suffered too much from his absence to give up his direction now that he had returned to them. They fell at his feet, and implored

him to keep the title of Superior. As to the details of the administration, Brother Bartholomew was accustomed to them, and would continue to attend to them.

Blessed de la Salle could not resist the desire so earnestly presented to him, and was fain to accept the offered burden. He would not consent, however, to manage the house, nor to preside at the exercises. He confined himself to saying mass, confessing the Brothers, making a spiritual discourse to them on Sundays, and spent the remainder of his time in prayer, and in finishing the works he had composed both for the direction of the schools, and the edification of his disciples.

The position of the servant of God in Paris was an embarrassing one. Abbé de Brou had taken advantage of his absence to upset the entire constitution of the Institute. He now wanted to have those changes approved by the founder himself, and to be confirmed by him in his title of Superior; for, without this, he felt that his powers were unstable, and his authority more nominal than real. He therefore drew up a long list of questions which he handed to the holy man, desiring him to give him prompt and full answers to each. He asked amongst other things:— “ Who would be the future Superiors of the Institute?— What were the vows to be?— What were to be the rules of the society? ”

Blessed de la Salle was not obliged to answer these questions, put to him by a person who had no right whatever to interrogate him. He might have refused, and carried the matter before the Archbishop, who most probably would have taken his part. But he did not choose to do this. He answered simply each point, except the first, on which he kept silence; for he did not wish either to recognize what had been done in his absence or to commence hostilities. This attitude irritated his adversary very much, and he contrived to have the payment of the Brothers' stipend suspended, and declared they should not touch a fraction of it until they gave him the satisfaction he desired. But, after all, Abbé de Brou had to surrender. He came at last to understand that Blessed de la Salle was the founder of the Institute, and should alone have the direction of it. Some time later, the parish-priest of Mende having written to Abbé de Brou for news of the Brothers, he replied:— “ I laid before M. de la Salle what you did me the honor to write to me; he intends to see to it. He seems rather embarrassed to find good

subjects for your town in place of those you have lost; but he has a real affection for that school, and means to attend to the matter at once. This is all I can tell you about it, for since he has been in Paris, I have thought it better to hand over to him the government of the society, which I only took charge of during his absence¹. ” The divergence was therefore now at an end, and Blessed de la Salle had resumed the direction of the Institute.

Some time after his return to Paris, a young Lutheran convert, the chevalier d’Armetat, entered the Novitiate. He was a German of illustrious birth, who had served in the armies of the Empire under Prince Eugene; he had been several times grievously wounded, and cured by those mysterious signs known as “ the secret. ”

After the battle of Denain, he left the service, and came to France. One day, he was passing through Lyons, and heard that a possessed person was being exorcised in a church. The religion of his childhood, and his sojourn in camps had made him sceptical; he did not believe in the existence of demons, and was curious to assist at this odd ceremony which he looked upon as a trick. So he went to the church, and got as near as he could to the possessed woman. She suddenly turned round, and looking at him with terrible eyes, cried out, in a voice that shook with rage:— “ Ah! thou dost not believe in demons! Wait. The day will come when thou shalt feel their fury! ”

This address made a profound impression on the young man. He was a stranger, absolutely unknown, and no one could have revealed to this woman the sentiments hidden in the bottom of his heart. He withdrew greatly disturbed. His mind, hitherto turned away from religion by the excitement of war, now reverted to it; he wanted to be instructed, to study this Catholic doctrine which he had always despised, so he went to the Archbishop of Lyons, who gave him masters and guides. In a few months, he was thoroughly converted, and abjured Lutheranism.

From Lyons he came to Paris, and addressed himself for direction to a priest of Saint Sulpice who advised him to enter the Novitiate of the Brothers. He was received there on the 8th of October 1714, and began the next day to follow the exercises of the novices. I

¹ The letter is in the Archives of Mende, and is dated, “ Paris, 5th of october 1714 ”.

was here that the demons were waiting for him. All his wounds re-opened, and he was seized in his whole body with horrible pains. The Brothers, hearing him groan and cry out, thought at first that he was bewailing his sins; but the next morning, not seeing him at the exercises, they went to look for him, and found him in his bed, motionless, covered with blood, and unconscious. Remedies and restoratives were applied, but his case seemed so hopeless, that Extreme Unction was administered to him. Scarcely had he received the sacrament than his wounds closed, he regained consciousness, and was soon well and able to follow the Rule of the house. This malady struck all who saw it as extraordinary. Fresh attacks recurred. The chevalier d'Armestat again lost consciousness, vomited blood, and rolled his eyes horribly, gazing fixedly at a cross that was in the room, and gesticulating with his arms as if to ward off some invisible person who was aiming blows at him. He seemed to be looking at some frightful vision. The whole night passed in this way, then he fell into a sort of lethargy which lasted four hours. In this state, he saw the demons threatening him with all kinds of torments if he persevered in his vocation. Then the Blessed Virgin, for whom he had a great devotion, appeared to him, and, scattering the infernal troop, consoled him. When he regained his senses, he earnestly asked for the habit. It was given him, and once more he became a prey to torturing pains. An invisible hand seized him by the throat as if to strangle him; his tongue grew thick, and he fell into such a state that viaticum had again to be administered to him, and they began to recite the prayers for the agonizing. He rallied once more and was cured, but soon again to fall a victim to a fresh attack. He seemed to see Blessed de la Salle, Brother Bartholomew and the priest who was directing him, all beating him cruelly.

The servant of God took careful notice of this extraordinary condition. He had nursed the poor sufferer with the tenderest charity; he had prayed for him; but nothing availed; the disease seemed to be assuming all the signs of a veritable possession, and, in this case, it could only be cured by the rites prescribed by the Church. Blessed de la Salle went to the sick man's room and shut himself in with him, and went through all the ceremonies of exorcism, whereupon the novice was delivered, and never felt the least return of his terrible malady.

After the holidays of 1715, the holy founder, seeing that life was too expensive in Paris, sent back the Novitiate to Saint Yon. Perhaps he wished at the same time to set it free from interference that was troublesome and unjustified; so Brother Bartholomew set out with three or four novices in the month of October.

The pious founder remained a month longer in Paris. He wanted to go, but he was embarrassed as to how he should demean himself towards the Archbishop of Paris. The latter was resisting the bull *Unigenitus*, which was beginning to move the whole country. Blessed de la Salle withdrew for two days into his cell, praying God constantly to know whether or not he ought to go to take leave of the Archbishop. Finally, he decided not to go. The day of his departure, he got up very early, said mass at Saint Sulpice, and went to Abbé de Brou to announce his departure. The Abbé was greatly surprised. He was afraid, too, that, deprived of its Superior, the school would again fall upon his hands, so he set himself against the holy man's departure. He had no right to do this; but Blessed de la Salle submitted to everybody. He obeyed humbly, and went back to the house without saying a word.

Meantime, his presence at Saint Yon was needed; the Novitiate wanted to be organized. The Brothers felt this, and so they went to Abbé de Brou and represented to him the disadvantages that arose to the Institute from his opposing Blessed de la Salle's departure. Amazed at the extraordinary obedience of a man so far above him in age, virtue and position, M. de Brou at once set him free to go. The holy man left immediately, and arrived at Saint Yon in the first days of December 1715.

Here he gave himself up completely to the direction of the novices, and applied to the work which he considered the basis of the Institute all the experience he had gathered during his long government.

Whilst he was absorbed in these holy occupations, he received the visit of two pious laymen, M. Gense, of Calais, and M. de la Cocherie, of Boulogne, who had come on purpose to Rouen to make his acquaintance. He received them, as was his wont, with great cordiality, and took them to a sort of little hermitage he had reserved to himself at the end of the garden. They broke bread together, and passed the day discoursing on the great duties of Christian life.

The two strangers made particular enquiries concerning the new society the holy priest had founded, and the difficulties that had beset him in the task. When they congratulated him on his courage, the holy man replied that it had been all God's doing. "For my part," he said with his charming simplicity, "I own to you that if God had shown me the labors and crosses that were to accompany the good I was to do in founding the Institute, my courage would have failed, and, far from undertaking it, I would not have dared put my finger to the work. A prey to contradiction, I have been persecuted by several prelates, even by those from whom I had a right to expect help. My own children, those whom I begot in Jesus Christ, and cherished with the utmost tenderness, whom I trained with the greatest care, and from whom I looked for great services, rose up against me and added to external trials those interior ones which are so much more acute. In a word, if God had not held out His hand and visibly sustained the edifice, it would long ago have been buried under its own ruins. The magistrates joined with our enemies, and lent them the weight of their authority to overthrow us. As our office offends the schoolmasters, we have in every one of these a declared and inveterate enemy, and all in a body they have often armed the powers of the world to destroy us. Yet, notwithstanding all, the edifice is standing, although it was so often trembling on the brink of ruin. This is what leads me to hope that it will endure, and render to the Church the services she has a right to expect from it."

Blessed de la Salle, in these few words, summed up the history of the foundation of his Institute and foretold its future destinies. He had sown in tears, and his children, despite those trials inseparable from all Christian undertakings, were to reap in joy. But what a homage he paid at the same time to the omnipotence of grace, which had led him unawares from first to last to the success of a vast enterprise, through obstacles the mere contemplation of which would have frightened him from attempting it! How kind God is to hide the future from us, to employ us like day-laborers, without revealing to us the secret of His designs, thus sparing our pride, which would be puffed up by their magnificence, and our cowardice which would quail before their difficulties.

M. Gense carried away with him a profound admiration for the

holy man, with whom his acquaintance did not end here. They exchanged letters, and M. Gense having fought against those who opposed the Bull *Unigenitus*, Blessed de la Salle wrote to congratulate him. They thought alike; both were animated with the same faith, the same loyal submission to the Church, the same love of the poor, and each at his post was working at the same task, the Christian education of youth.

M. Gense had pressed the holy man to come and see him at Calais; but M. de la Salle excused himself on the grounds of his occupations, his age and his infirmities. There were, however, several of his schools already in the North, and a journey there might be of some use, so Brother Bartholomew begged him to undertake it, and he at once consented. He set out at the beginning of August 1716. He was received with great honor by the magistrates and the inhabitants of Calais, and M. Gense greeted him as his master. He invited him to dine, and wished even to take advantage of this opportunity to have his portrait taken. A painter was hidden behind a piece of tapestry, so placed that he had a view of the servant of God without being seen. He had drawn a part of the face, when he was obliged to lift up his head to catch the whole, and in doing so Blessed de la Salle caught sight of him. He at once assumed a severe countenance, rose and left the table, coldly thanking his host. He went home exceedingly annoyed at this outrage against his modesty. He could not understand what anybody could want with his portrait, and pretended that they had been turning him into ridicule. M. Gense never could persuade him to go back.

His sojourn at Calais gave him an opportunity of showing his tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin. The parish dean of the town had invited him to sing high mass on the feast of the Assumption, and the servant of God had accepted. In the middle of the service, the dean got into the pulpit, to preach as usual on the gospel of the day, but he made no allusion to the feast. He was imbued with the new heresy, and secretly opposed to the honor paid to the Mother of God. Blessed de la Salle was scandalized by this silence, and on coming out from mass, he could not refrain from expressing his displeasure. He went to the parish-priest, upbraided him with his omission, and burst out into such eloquent praise of the Mother of God, that the culprit felt all his objections melting away, and

promised to repair his fault the following Sunday. And he kept his word. He again ascended the pulpit, and discoursed on the mystery with such orthodoxy and fervor, that his audience were astonished, never having heard such a tribute to Our Lady from his lips.

From Calais, M. de la Salle went to Saint Omer, where his presence had long been desired. While he was in Provence, the Bishop of Saint Omer, M^{gr} François de Valbelle de Tourves, who had formed the plan of opening a free school, had gone to Paris in hope of obtaining Brothers. But we know the opinions that reigned at that time concerning the government of the Institute. The Novitiate was nearly empty, and answer was made to the prelate that they had not any available Brothers, nor any hope of being able to form new schools. M^{gr} de Valbelle was not disheartened, however. He waited.

When the pious founder returned, the Brothers told him about this demand, and advised him to re-open negotiations with the Bishop.

At first, he refused; but, yielding to their entreaties, he wrote to the Bishop. He had a most satisfactory reply. M^{gr} de Valbelle begged him to come to Saint Omer as soon as possible, and to enable him to do so, he even postponed the visitation he was about to make in the diocese. But Blessed de la Salle was delayed, and when he got to Saint Omer, the Bishop was gone. The Vicar general, M. Tissot, received him with great honor; he showed him the site on which he meant to build a house for the Brothers, and presented to him the persons who were to provide the necessary funds for founding the establishment. According to his custom, the holy man withdrew at once to the church, where he remained long in prayer, commending the work to God. Next day, he celebrated mass in honor of St Omer, patron of the town. The matter was not concluded at once, however, and the school was not opened until 1719.

From Saint Omer, Blessed de la Salle came back to Rouen, passing by Boulogne, where a school had been founded in 1710 by M. de la Cocherie. It was situated in the lower town, and the house, inhabited by six Brothers, was small and inconvenient. Three years later, the Bishop had opened another one in the upper town, and had asked for two more Brothers to direct it. They then

undertook to rebuild the first house. The King had given the ground, the first founders had furnished funds, and everybody had helped. The Marquis of Cortembert, governor of the town, had himself drawn the plan, given the materials, and sent carters who did all the transporting gratis.

At this juncture, Blessed de la Salle arrived, and was received with extraordinary honors. The most important persons of the town wanted to see him, to receive him, to get his advice, to admire this man so sublime by his virtues, so humble in his appearance, so holy in his actions, and who was about to educate the people of France. The servant of God, despite his humility, could not escape the homage that was forced upon him; but he took it all with his accustomed simplicity; he went about so miserably clad, that his friends carried off by main force his tattered old soutane, and compelled him to put on another that was made up in a hurry.

M. de la Cocherie was above all others happy to have the holy man in his house, for he looked upon him as a saint. But all these honors distressed the object of them exceedingly; they displeased him far more than persecutions and insult. He, therefore, departed as quickly as he could, and continued his visitation, leaving the Brothers to reap the fruit of the admiration that he inspired.

No sooner did he get back to Rouen than he made haste to carry out a project that had long been in his mind; this was to resign, and have another Superior general elected in his place. He was only sixty-five years of age; but fatigue and austerities had weakened his constitution, and he looked upon his death as being near at hand. The storms that during his absence had shaken the Institute and threatened to destroy its spirit, the strife which had arisen about the government of the Brothers, had led him to fear much greater evils if he were to die without arranging about his successor. He longed, moreover, to devote to prayer the days that yet remained to him. After having worked so hard for others, it was only just that he should work a little for himself, and spend some years in silence and retirement, preparing himself for the last and supreme act of a Christian's life.

The Brothers could no longer have any reasonable objection to his carrying out this design. Since his return from the South, he had slipped the direction of the community into the hands of

Brother Bartholomew, and kept the title of Superior himself, without exercising the authority of his office. It was, therefore, only a question of transmitting to another a purely nominal dignity. But this transmission must needs be regularly conducted, so as to put a barrier against all possible future contestations; and, on the other hand, it was necessary that it should be done secretly, so as to prevent the chance of strangers interfering.

On the 4th of December 1716, M. de la Salle called together the six leading Brothers of Rouen, and told them of his plan. At first, he met with vehement resistance. They loved him tenderly, and were fearful of loosening the ties that bound him to them. He ended, however, by convincing them of the wisdom of his motives, and feeling gave way to reason. It was agreed that one of them should set out secretly on a round of visits to all the houses, and acquaint them all with the motives which made it desirable to have a general assembly, and proceed to the election of a new Superior. Nobody was better fitted for this mission than Brother Bartholomew. He was known and loved by all, and Providence, who destined him to continue the work of Blessed de la Salle, was preparing him for it by this general visit to all the houses of the Institute. He set out in December 1716, going first to Chartres, then to Moulins, then on to the Cevennes, Mende, Vans, Alais, and finally to Avignon, where he arrived at the beginning of January 1717. From here, he went to Marseilles, returning by Dijon, passing by Grenoble, and visiting the schools of Champagne, Troyes, Rethel, Rheims, Laon and Guise, where he arrived at the beginning of March. He turned his steps towards the North, and visited the schools of Calais and Boulogne. He made the purpose of his journey clear to all the Brothers, and persuaded them all of the wisdom of their venerable founder's intentions. He had brought with him a model of the deed that all would have to sign, giving their consent to the decisions to be formulated at the general Assembly.

Brother Bartholomew was received everywhere with great demonstrations of joy and respect. The renown of his wisdom and his virtues was widely diffused through the Institute, and all were anxious to see the man who, during the absence of Blessed de la Salle, had borne the weight of government. He returned to Saint Yon at the end of March 1717, gave an account of his journey; then after a few days' rest, he set out again to visit the houses of Paris,

Versailles, and Saint Denis. His mission here succeeded beyond what could have been expected. One day, he fell from his horse, and his foot caught in the stirrup; he was dragged a long way over the ground, and ought humanly speaking to have been killed; he was not even hurt.

Another day, two robbers accosted him at the entrance of a town, with the evident intention of robbing him; but, arrested by some mysterious power, they could not utter a word, and after following him for some distance, they turned back without laying a finger on him.

A no less signal mark of God's blessing was the fact that he carried away from every house the consent of all the Brothers to the decisions of the approaching Assembly. In order that this consent might be unanimous, Blessed de la Salle had written to Rome to Brother Gabriel, as early as December 1716, to ask for his acquiescence.

The traditions of the Institute seemed to point to the Feast of Pentecost as the date assigned for the general Assembly. At the beginning of the Society, and later at Vaugirard in 1694, the assemblies were held at this period of the liturgical year. This time, the Directors were all invited to Saint Yon. Sixteen answered to the call. The houses represented at the Assembly were Alais, Boulogne, Calais, Chartres, Grenoble, Guise, Laon, Avignon, Paris, Rheims, Rouen, Darnetal, Rethel, Versailles and Saint Denis. As to the Directors of Moulins, Dijon, Troyes, Mende, Vans and Marseilles, they were not able to come. In spite of these absences, Blessed de la Salle saw his Institute spread out before him like the tree sprung from the grain of mustard seed. It was now a great order.

As soon as the Directors were assembled, he told them the motive for which they had been convoked. They were to prepare for the great act before them by a retreat which was to begin on the 16th of May.

The Servant of God had composed a special prayer to invoke the light of the Holy Spirit, and he gave them the rules according to which they were to proceed for the election, rules chiefly borrowed from the Constitutions of St Ignatius. Then he spoke a word of final advice to them:— “ Purify your intentions and desires,” he said, “ if you want to be the organs of the Holy Ghost to name him

who is destined to govern you. Set aside all human considerations, do not listen to the voice of nature, reject false lights, and the prejudices of the human spirit. " Act without any interested feeling, without sympathy or antipathy, without passion or inclination, without natural attraction or repulsion. Keep your hearts in a state of complete indifference, and incline them only towards him who will be set before you by the majority of votes. As it is not you who are to elect, but God in you, and by you, lift up your hearts to him, and weary not in addressing to Him that prayer of the Apostles :— ' Show us him whom you have chosen.' If you wish to know that chosen one, give your vote to whomsoever your conscience names, to him who is pointed out by merit, to him whom at the hour of death you will wish to have chosen, to him who is best fitted to govern the Institute, who most possesses its spirit, who is best capable of maintaining order, of keeping alive fervor, and sanctifying you all. Name him who is known to you as the most enlightened, the wisest, the most virtuous, the firmest. Give your vote to him who possesses those six qualities so necessary for governing the family of God— prudence, gentleness, vigilance, firmness, piety, zeal and charity; to him who presents in the highest degree that rare combination of virtues— zeal with prudence, light with charity, firmness with gentleness, kindness with severity; to him who possesses gentleness without softness, vigilance without over anxiety, firmness without inflexibility, zeal without bitterness, goodness without weakness, prudence without cunning. Give your vote to him who is the holiest, or who wishes to become it, who is worthy of being your model in all things; to him who will be the humblest in the first place, who will have the heart of a father towards you, and make his authority loveable. Look neither to talents nor birth in making this choice, nor to age, nor length of years in the Institute, nor to face, nor to figure. Look not at the man, but see God in him. You will choose him whom God Himself has chosen if you seek a man according to His heart, and not according to your own, a man of grace in whom grace acts, and not a man according to your taste, and natural inclination. "

The holy man then withdrew to his cell to join his prayers with those of his children, leaving them free to proceed to their election, and invoking on them the blessing of heaven. Brother Bartholomew

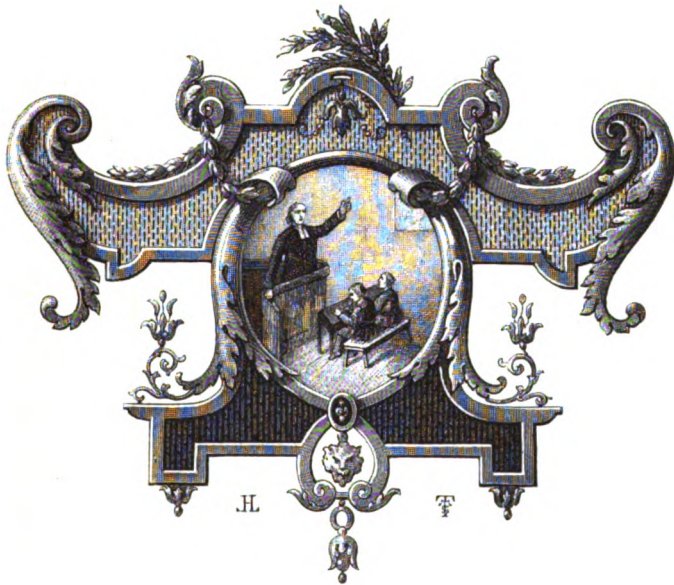
was charged to preside over the Assembly and to conduct the exercises. Then, after two days' deliberation all the votes fell upon him, and, on May 18th 1717, he was elected Superior general of the Institute.

This choice did not surprise Blessed de la Salle; on hearing of it, he said simply: "He has been for a long time the acting Superior." The election had, therefore, ratified the choice which he had himself made from the first. The only one who objected to it was the Religious on whose shoulders the burden of authority had fallen. He entreated the Brothers to spare his weakness, and was confused at seeing them come one after another to kneel at his feet and acknowledge him as their Superior. He had, however, to submit, and accept the nomination as the expression of the will of God. He begged for two Brothers to second him in his task, and two Assistants were given him: Brother John, Director of the Paris house, and Brother Joseph, Director of that of Rheims. The retreat was prolonged to Trinity Sunday, which is the great feast of the Institute, and then all the Brothers, with Blessed de la Salle and Brother Bartholomew at their head, renewed their vows.

Acting on M. de la Salle's advice, the Assembly met to examine the Rules with the new Superior, and consider what ought to be added to them, and what retrenched. Each one gave his opinion with perfect freedom, and it was agreed by common consent that they would refer the matter to their holy founder, and abide by his decisions concerning all necessary modifications. He consented to this, and took the thing in hand. He added some chapters borrowed in part from St Ignatius, and the Rule thus revised was sent to all the houses, with Brother Bartholomew's signature.

While the things related in the last chapters were coming to pass, a great event, whose effect made itself felt all over France, occurred. After a reign of seventy-two years, Louis the Fourteenth died on September the 1st 1715, passing away in that sumptuous palace of Versailles, which he had made one of the wonders of the age. It would be ungrateful towards his memory not to recall here the benefits which the budding Institute of the Brothers enjoyed so amply under the government of that monarch, "whose name had become identified with greatness." Say what we will, Louis XIV.

will always be “ Louis the Great, ” and posterity will never forget what he did for France, whose frontiers he extended; for art, to which he gave so many master-pieces; and for the lowly schools where the children of the poor were taught, thanks to him, respect for authority and love for God.





Death of Blessed de la Salle.

CHAPTER XVI.

LAST YEARS AND DEATH OF BLESSED DE LA SALLE (1717-1719).

No sooner was the servant of God set free from the cares of government, than he had but one thought, which was to bring to perfection the virtues of humility and obedience that he had practised all his life. He not only refused to give an order of any sort, but he would not do the least thing without asking permission. He left unanswered the greater number of letters addressed to him, and to those who came to him for direction, he repeated: "I am no longer anything; go to the Brother Superior;" or else: "Take care not to look to me for anything; I can meddle with nothing now; I must think of my sins, and prepare for death."

He considered himself as a sinner, unfit to mix with other men. In the refectory, he insisted on having the last place, after the lay Brothers. At recreation, he stayed humbly with the youngest. He would not leave his cell without a distinct permission. In the midst of all his duties, so faithfully performed, he could not, to use the expression of one of his contemporaries, "disoccupy himself with God."

The only privileges he retained were those of saying mass, confessing the Brothers and the novices, and directing their consciences, but without meddling in the government of the Institute. Even this humility had its trials, so true is it that here below good is never done without suffering. M^r d'Aubigné had revoked generally the faculties of priests in his diocese, and ordered all those who wished to hear confession to come to him for fresh powers. Blessed de la Salle, who now considered himself simply as the chaplain of the Brothers, did not wish to make this application himself. He thought it was for Brother Bartholomew to do it, he being now his Superior. Brother Bartholomew, accordingly, presented himself at the Archbishop's; but he was badly received. He was told that it was not his business to come and ask faculties for a priest, and that M. de la Salle's humility was out of place:— "If he wants faculties, let him come and fetch them," was the message Brother Bartholomew brought back. The holy man went for them, and received them at once.

The servant of God, throughout his heroic life, had been favored with supernatural gifts that he kept carefully concealed lest any glory should accrue therefrom to him. One of the founders of the Hospital in Canada came to Paris, and wanted to carry back some Brothers with him, and Brother Bartholomew, yielding to his entreaties, promised to give him some. Blessed de la Salle, on hearing this, merely exclaimed:— "Oh, my goodness! What are you going to do? You are going to undertake a thing that will bring you into endless trouble, and have very unpleasant consequences." He repeated this on two separate occasions. The Brothers had such confidence in him that this sufficed to make them give up their design. And they had reason to be thankful for it, for they learned afterwards that the Brothers would have been exposed to very great dangers.

M. Rogier, that friend who had done so much mischief in the Abbé Clement's affair, had left Blessed de la Salle a considerable sum in his will, by way of reparation, and the holy man was obliged to go to Paris for certain necessary formalities. He at first refused; but the Institute was poor, and in great need of the money, so Brother Bartholomew desired him to go, and he went at once. He reached Paris on the 4th of October 1717. He refused to stay at the Brothers' house, fearing the honors that awaited him there, and

went and begged for hospitality at the Seminary of Saint Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, where he hoped to be quiet and unknown, and where he edified all by his piety. The business was a long time getting settled. The holy man refused to accept the legacy with the title of Superior, and the notary had to yield to his inflexible will.

While their founder was in Paris, the Brothers were again threatened with being turned out of the house they had chosen. The Marquise of Louvois, who owned the house they occupied at Saint Yon, died, and the heirs were going to sell it in order to make a division of the property, so they sent word to the Brothers that they must leave. This was a great blow to the Community. They were admirably situated, in fine air, and the house and garden were spacious. Moreover, they had been living there for fourteen years, and the idea of leaving it and hunting for another was painful to them. It occurred to them to buy it. They had not the money, it is true; but Blessed de la Salle had taught them to reckon on Providence. He would not however, this time take the responsibility of advising them; his humility forbade it. "It is not fitting," he wrote to Brother Bartholomew, "that I should have any share in this business, I who am nothing, while you, as Superior, are master." The Brothers made up their minds to buy the house. Then the holy man went off to Abbé de Louvois, who had been the executor of his mother's will, and had a great regard for him for sake of the Archbishop of Rheims, M^{re} Letellier, his uncle. Abbé de Louvois promised to put the house at a reasonable price, and to give the Brothers the preference. The negotiation was very troublesome, and was twice on the point of being broken off. Finally, it was adjudged in favor of Brother Bartholomew. Blessed de la Salle refused to figure in it. "I am too old," he said. "I am working to get free from all ties with the affairs of this world."

Providence, on whom the Brothers reckoned, did not, as we see, fail them.

Meantime, the servant of God was the admiration of the holy priests at Saint Nicolas, who after his death bore testimony to his sanctity. Despite his age, he rose at the same hour as the others, and he was always amongst the first at the exercises, at the morning meditation, at the spiritual conferences, and at divine office. In spite of his infirmities, he would not be dispensed from a single

point of the Rule, and denied himself everything that approached an alleviation. During this winter that he passed in Paris, he never had a fire in his room. Instead of warming himself at recreation with the others, he used to walk in the garden with some young seminarians whom he was trying to inflame with the love of God and detachment from this world. In all things, he was poor and humble. His clothes were of the coarsest serge. In conversation, he never spoke of himself or of what he had done. He deferred meekly to others, and was always ready to yield to their opinion, seeming to forget all that he had been, and all that he had done. He looked upon himself truly as the lowest in the house.

Jansenism continued to trouble the Church of France, and was the general topic of conversation. Blessed de la Salle took no part in these discussions, which had always appeared to him dangerous to charity and useless to faith. When, however, he was obliged to give his opinion, he manifested a great horror of the new heresy, and proclaimed his perfect submission to the teaching of the Church and the decisions of the Holy See. He lived above all by prayer, humility and penance. He gave from two to three hours daily to meditation, saying that, as he was a mere novice in perfection, he ought to take advantage of being at leisure in a seminary to learn over again the lessons he had been taught at Saint Sulpice fifty years ago, and which he had forgotten.

He found it hard to leave this quiet retreat. The Brothers were impatiently calling him back to them, but he lingered on at Saint Nicolas. "I am a good-for-nothing," he wrote to Brother Bartholomew, "and the Institute ought to look upon it as a special mercy of Divine Providence to be rid of me." I want to be led, not to lead. It is time I should look after my own sanctification; I have been looking after other people's long enough; since God has given me such a good opportunity, I must profit by it, and if I were to let it escape, I should have to regret it for the rest of my life. I have been commanding long enough. The day has come for me to obey, and I ought to try and teach you all by my example to prefer the state of dependence to that of authority. All things considered, I have a mind to end my days where I am." But this great humility only made the Brothers more ardently desirous of having in their midst the Father from whom they had still so much to learn. They

feared that death might overtake him in the house of strangers, and they wished to be near him to close his eyes.

His hosts at the seminary, despite the joy they had in possessing him, and the temptation it was to them to keep him, were compelled to acknowledge that his place was in the midst of his children. Brother Bartholomew at last came to fetch him, and exercised his authority to desire him to return. Blessed de la Salle, docile as usual, submitted without further resistance. Before leaving Paris, he wished to visit for the last time the Brothers there, whom he did not expect to see again. All gathered round him, asking for his blessing. He refused to give it, saying that he was unworthy; but he yielded at last, and then took leave of them, and returned to Saint Yon with Brother Bartholomew. This was on the 7th of March 1718.

Arrived at Saint Yon, he set to work to put everything in order, for he foresaw his approaching death, and had foretold it. On the 11th of August, he transferred several deeds and titles which were in his name. To his Brother, Louis de la Salle, by a deed of December the 18th, he made over five houses that he founded at Rethel, that they might be used for the schools of Rethel and Rheims. But above all, he made ready for death by a more faithful practice of every virtue.

His life was more retired than it had ever been before. He had chosen the meanest room in the house, a dark room on the ground floor, opening into the stables. It had been impossible to make him accept any other. At table he would be served last, after the lay Brothers, and it was with great difficulty he had consented to say the *Benedicite*, only yielding because there was no other priest present. All his time went in prayer, in confessing the Brothers, in forming the novices, in teaching the young boarders, and converting the boys who were in confinement. There was no getting him away from these functions. During his free moments, he worked at some writings he was finishing for the sanctification of the Brothers, amongst others a "Method of mental prayer." But even now his trials were not over. They only end for the Saints after death.

The Bishop of Boulogne, who, in 1716, had shown such intense sympathy for Blessed de la Salle, was an ardent Jansenist, defending Quesnel's book, and appealing against the Bull *Unigenitus*. Part of

his clergy had gone over with him to the sect, and they hoped to entice the Brothers to join them. In order to influence them, they said that Blessed de la Salle himself inclined to the new doctrines, and that he appealed against the Bull *Unigenitus*. The Brothers wrote to him, which gave him the opportunity of answering them in an admirable letter full of faith and submission to the Church—“ I don't think, ” he said, “ that I gave the Dean reason to say I was of the number of those who were appealing, my dear Brother. I never dreamed of appealing any more than of embracing the new doctrine of the appellants to the future council. I have too much respect for our Holy Father the Pope, and too much submission for the decision of the Holy See, not to acquiesce. I wish in this to do like St Jerome, who, in a difficulty created in the Church by the Arians, who wanted him to admit that there were in God three hypostases, thought fit to consult the chair of St Peter on which he knew the Church was built. Addressing himself to Pope Damasus, he said that if His Holiness ordered him to recognize the three hypostases in God, in spite of his own misgiving he would declare there were three hypostases. The Saint concluded his letter by imploring the Pope in the name of Jesus crucified, Saviour of the world, and of the Blessed Trinity of three Divine Persons in one nature, to authorize him to confess or to deny that there were three hypostases in God. The Dean and others must not, therefore, be surprised if, following the example of this great Saint so enlightened in matters of religion, I find it that he who sits in the chair of Peter has spoken by a Bull which has been accepted by almost all the Bishops of the world, and has condemned the hundred and one propositions taken from Father Quesnel's book, and if, after so authentic a decision of the Church, I say with St Augustine that the case is closed. This is my feeling and opinion on the subject, and they have always been the same, and will never change. ”

This letter is dated from Rouen, January 28th 1719, three months before the death of the servant of God, and consequently may be considered the testament of the faith in which he had lived, and in which he wished to die.

The servant of God had also some difficulties with the parish-priest of Saint Sever, whose parishioner he was, and whose indiscreet zeal had wanted to compel the Brothers, for the edification of his Church, to practices incompatible with their Rule and the good

order of the house. An agreement was made between them, but some points of it having been found impracticable, the pastor held Blessed de la Salle responsible, and complained of the matter to his ecclesiastical Superiors, the Archbishop of Rouen and his Vicar general. The Archbishop allowed himself to be influenced, and even went so far as to withdraw from the servant of God the faculties that he had given him for the house of Saint Yon. This affair was a fresh source of anxiety for the holy man; but he bore the trial with his habitual serenity, and nothing could force him to utter an angry word, or show the slightest sign of impatience.

Blessed de la Salle had the presentiment of his death. He was not yet very old, and his infirmities, although painful, were not of that kind which shorten life. He had long been suffering from rheumatism that he had caught in the little house of Vaugirard, where he had spent winters without fire in a cell open to all the winds of heaven, and with damp linen. He had inherited from all this misery pains that had often nailed him to his bed, incapable of moving, every limb tortured as if he were on the rack. An asthma was added to this, and he suffered unceasingly, day and night; but these sufferings, however painful they may be, generally come with age, and are no sign of the nearness of death. The forebodings of the holy man were from another cause, and it was from above that he was warned of his approaching end. Since his return to Saint Yon, he was more and more detached from the world, and thought only of appearing before God. "I beg of you for the love of God", he writes at this period to one of the Brothers who consulted him, "don't address yourself to me, my dear Brother. You have Superiors to whom you should communicate your affairs, spiritual and temporal. I wish henceforth to think only of death, which is soon going to separate me from all creatures."

The same idea recurs in all his conversations. The only care he took was to hide the acute pains that he was suffering, to wear a calm and cheerful countenance, and not to relax any of his exercises or austerities. His abstinence was as rigorous as ever, and his prayers were not abridged. The Lent of 1719 began. Despite the entreaties of those around him, he insisted on observing all its

prescriptions. "The victim is going to be immolated," he would reply, "we must work at its purification." But his strength was rapidly diminishing. His asthma became so oppressive, that he could hardly breathe. His confessor considered that he was no longer fit to abstain, and forbade him. He obeyed humbly.

Soon after this, an accident occurred and brought on a serious complication, which hastened the final crisis— a door fell on his head, and caused him violent pain. The Doctor considered the case fatal, and did not conceal the truth from him. The servant of God learned the tidings with joy, like a man who at last sees the goal to which he has been journeying. He accepted, nevertheless, all the remedies that were ordered, and which were often more painful than the disease itself. The only thing he refused to do was to stay in bed; he wished death to find him up, like a brave athlete. He dragged himself to all the exercises, until, at last, his strength betrayed his courage, and he could no longer move. His joy was not diminished; it increased with his suffering. "I trust," he said, "that I shall be soon led out of Egypt, and brought into the true land of promise."

The feast of St Joseph was drawing near. Blessed de la Salle had always had a great veneration for the glorious Saint under whose protection he had placed the Institute, and who is the patron of those who watch over youth. He had an ardent desire to say mass once more in his honor. This favor, contrary to all expectation, was granted to him. On the 18th of March, towards evening, his pains grew much less, and his strength returned. The night was calm, and next morning he was able to rise, and go up to the altar, and offer the holy sacrifice in the midst of his Brothers, who could hardly believe the evidence of their eyes. All day, he conversed with them, heard their last confidences, gave them parting advice, and then lay down again. He was now evidently much worse.

The parish-priest of Saint Sever was warned of the danger, and hastened to visit him. Seeing, as all did, that there was no hope, and fearing from the great serenity of the dying man that he was under a delusion as to his state, he thought it necessary to tell him the truth without circumlocution. "Know," he said, "that you are going to die, and that you will then appear before God." Blessed de la Salle replied: "I know it, and I am quite resigned to His orders. My fate is in His hands. May His will be done!"

And, in truth, his soul was constantly united to God, and he was waiting with holy impatience for the last links that bound him to this world to be broken. Some days passed thus.

He grew worse, and asked for the Viaticum. They promised to bring it to him the next day, which was Wednesday in Holy Week, and he spent the whole night in preparing himself for this great act. His poor cell was adorned as well as the poverty of the house permitted. He insisted on being lifted out of his bed, clothed in his surplice and stole, and placed sitting upright in a chair. At the sound of the bell that announced the approach of the priest, he fell upon his knees, and received Communion, his face all aglow with that extraordinary devotion that he so often displayed in the celebration of the Divine mysteries. All the spectators were deeply impressed. It was the last rays of a life that was fading away. Next day, Holy Thursday, he received Extreme Unction. His mind was not the least dimmed; on the contrary, it had that peculiar lucidity which God reserves for His Saints at the last hour. He saw into souls, and gave some supreme warnings and advice to the Brothers who were kneeling round his bed. A man of the world, drawing near to consult him about something, received this answer: "It only depends on yourself to be saved. God is loading you with His graces, but you don't correspond to them. You don't go to Him as you ought, and you bury the talents that He has entrusted to you."

The voice of the holy man was growing weaker and weaker. All his children fell upon their knees, and Brother Bartholomew begged him to give his blessing to all the Brothers of the Institute. He hesitated at first from humility; but then raising his eyes to heaven, and extending his hands, he said: "May the Lord bless you all!"

Towards evening, he became unconscious. They said the prayers of the agonizing. When they were ended, he came to himself, and, addressing the Brothers, said: "If you wish to persevere and die in your vocation, have no intercourse with people in the world. Little by little, you will get a taste for their habits, and get so drawn into conversation with them, that you will no longer be able, out of politeness, to refrain from applauding their discourse, however pernicious it may be, which will lead you to fall away into unfaithfulness. Being no longer faithful in observing your Rule, you will grow disgusted with your vocation, and will abandon it."

A cold sweat interrupted him here, and the agony began. It

lasted from midnight till two in the morning. It being the night of Good Friday, Blessed de la Salle was associated with the sufferings of the Passion. Towards morning, consciousness partly returned. They told him to invoke the assistance of the Blessed Virgin, his constant protectress, and he recited the prayer he was in the habit of saying every night— *Maria, Mater gratiæ*. The Brother Superior



Portrait of Blessed de la Salle, from a most valuable miniature belonging to M. Édouard Pelay, of Rouen. — Drawn by Édouard Garnier; engraved by Chapon.

asked him if he accepted his sufferings with joy. “Yes,” he replied, “I adore in all things the designs of God upon me.”

These were his last words.

At three o'clock in the morning, the agony began again, and lasted an hour. The body was agitated, but the face was tranquil. Towards four o'clock, he joined his hands, raised his eyes to heaven, made an effort to raise himself as if to go to meet some one, and expired. He had gone to celebrate the Paschal feast in heaven. It was the 7th of April 1719. Blessed de la Salle was sixty-eight years of age.

When the news of his death was spread through the town of

Rouen, a great concourse of people flocked to the house to see him for the last time. Every one looked upon him as a Saint, and wanted to gaze once more upon his countenance, and carry away some souvenir of him. A crucifix, a New Testament, an Imitation of Christ, made up the sum of his wealth, so his clothes had to be cut up to content the pious avidity of the people.

The venerable body remained exposed in the chapel of Saint Yon, clothed in his sacerdotal vestments, from Friday evening to Saturday afternoon. The face had lost none of its beauty and serenity. Death had only thrown over his features a thin veil through which shone the splendors of eternal life. On Holy Saturday he was buried, very quietly because of the Paschal feast. The body was borne by six Brothers, and followed by all the others chaunting psalms; tears were streaming from their eyes, and sobs mingling with their prayers. They had lost their father and benefactor, and were truly orphans. Ecclesiastics, Religious of all orders came to attend the funeral.

The service was celebrated on Quasimodo Monday by the priests of the little seminary of Saint Nicaise, and a great number of notabilities came to pay the last honors to a man who had fled from honors all his life.

The body was laid to rest in the chapel of Saint Susanne in the church of Saint Sever. On his tomb was engraved an inscription now effaced and replaced by the following one in Latin:— “ Here awaits the resurrection venerable John Baptist de la Salle, of Rheims, Priest, Doctor in theology, Canon of the Metropolitan Church of Rheims, Founder of the Brothers of the Christian schools. He died on Good Friday, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, the 7th of April 1719, in the house of the Brothers of Saint Yon, in this parish. May God grant that he find rest ! ”

Several parish-priests celebrated solemn masses, and Brother Bartholomew received a great number of letters expressing the deep affliction which this death had caused throughout France.

Blessed de la Salle was rather above the middle height, and well proportioned. His constitution, delicate in childhood, had grown strong from exercise and work, until penances and excessive fatigue weakened his health. His forehead was broad, his nose straight,

his eyes large and of a blueish grey, his skin was tanned by exposure and travelling, his hair, which curled, and which had been chestnut in his youth, was grey and white in his declining years. His countenance bore the stamp of great sweetness and majesty. His air was modest and serene; his manners simple and gracious. An atmosphere of holiness breathed from his whole person. We are here only reproducing the incomparable portrait of his body traced by his first historian, than which nothing could be more truthful and accurate in every line. Let us now reproduce that of his soul, drawn by the same master-hand :— “ Nobody ”, says Canon Blain, “ had more the air of a Saint. Grace, enthroned, as it were, on his countenance, seemed to show forth to men what he was before God, and depict there the beauties of his soul. You were drawn towards God in looking at him. Everything in him breathed the perfume of the virtues of humility, modesty, sweetness, charity, tranquillity, equality of mind, mortification and deep piety. Always the same under all circumstances of sorrow and trouble, in so many painful and vexatious events, and when suffering from such anxiety and inward care, he was like unto a man, whose heart, fixed on heaven, takes no interest in what is passing here below; he was like a man who strove to regulate all his thoughts and desires according to God’s glory, and solely in view of the Divine pleasure.

“ His life is the Gospel put in practice. To do penance, to deny oneself, to mortify and crucify the flesh, to pray, to converse with God, to appear amongst men only to labor for their salvation or to receive their contempt, to devote oneself wholly to the poorest and most abandoned, to suffer everything, to give way to everyone, never to complain, never to feel offended, always to see oneself in the wrong, to bless God, to take His will in all things for the rule of our own will, to love our friends in Him and our enemies for Him, only to see and desire God in all things, to be interested only in His glory, to forget everything else, to have no aversion towards anything but the world, to hate nothing but sin, to fear nothing but to displease the sovereign majesty, to desire only to imitate Jesus Christ, to be attracted only by the cross, and to love God alone, is not this the epitome of the Gospel and of Blessed de la Salle’s life?

“ What examples of self-forgetfulness, of severity for the body, of contempt for the world, of thirst for justice, of purity of heart, of a

holy passion for humiliation and suffering, of detachment from all earthly things, of love of prayer, of union with God and sacrifice of self, does not the history of this saintly priest offer to us? What graces are hidden in his interior life, and what merits accumulated in that life of crucified suffering, will be manifested on that day when the secrets of hearts shall be revealed!

“The servant of God was like a man dead to everything; a man in whom nature no more dared to show itself, nor put forward the least claim; a man whose life was wholly supernatural, celestial, divine; who thought, spoke and acted as if he had been of a higher nature; a man whose natural element had become virtue, whose life was God, whose soul and centre were Jesus Christ.

“In prayer, he looked like an angel; at the altar, like a seraph; in his conduct, he was truly an apostolic man; in tribulation, he was another Job; in poverty, a Tobias; in abandonment to Providence, a Francis of Assisi; in the rigors of penance, a second Abbé de Rancé; in the practice of obedience, a new Dositheus; in the exercises of every virtue, a perfect disciple of Jesus Christ. This is Blessed de la Salle as he really was; this is his true portrait.”

Until 1734 the body of Blessed de la Salle¹ remained in the church of Saint Sever, where it had been laid the day after his death. The Brothers, having added a church to their house at Saint Yon, asked to have the remains of their founder restored to them. The Archbishop consented, and the body was exhumed on the 16th of July 1734.

The tomb was opened, and the bones were found intact in their natural position. They were covered with a white cloth, placed in a leaden coffin, and then in a wooden chest that was sealed. An immense crowd assisted at this touching ceremony. The coffin was placed in a vault behind the altar of the choir.

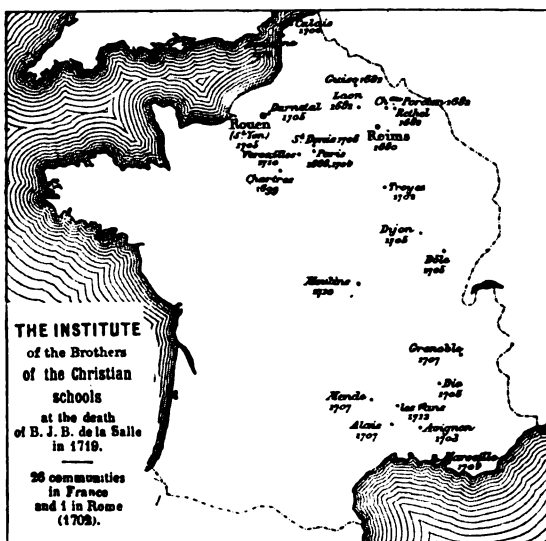
In 1793, the revolutionary mob broke open the tomb and stole the lead; but they left the body almost intact.

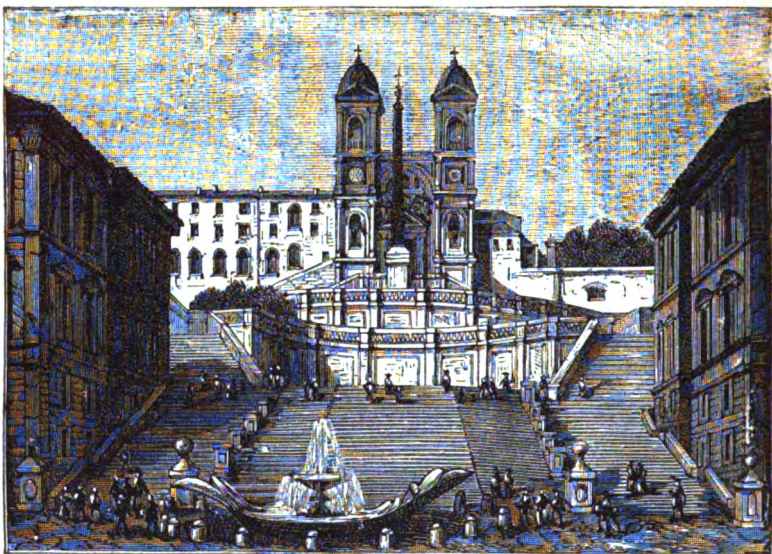
¹ The Brothers in Paris possess precious relics of Blessed de la Salle: his cloak, his stole, a chasuble, a cloak for state occasions, a soutane, two square caps, two collars, a cross to be worn on the breast, belts of iron and copper, disciplines of cord, part of his hair shirt, the ensigns of his dignity and his instruments of penance; all these things testify to that sanctity which the Church has proclaimed.

When the cause of the canonization was begun, the remains of Blessed de la Salle were exhumed in the presence of a secretary of the Archbishopric, a physician, a representative of the civil authority, several ecclesiastical and lay witnesses, and some Brothers, amongst whom were Brother Calixtus, Director of the Normal school, and Brother Peloguin, Director of the schools at Rouen. These two were, later on, assistants of the Superior general.

All the witnesses signed the account of the exhumation certifying that the bones were almost all there, and that no doubt could exist as to their identity. They were consigned to a vault made behind the altar in the chapel of the Brothers' house, in the interior of Rouen, on the site of the old church of Saint LÔ. Finally, they were removed in 1881 to the chapel of the boarding-school established in the town, where they will remain until the Church permits worship to be paid to them, and thus glorifies in this world so many exalted virtues.

We have endeavored to show forth the fecundity and the splendor of those virtues, and we venture to hope that we have succeeded; for the merits of the Saints are the most precious inheritance of nations, and Blessed de la Salle is at once an honor to the Church, and one of the purest glories of France.





Rome : the Piazza di Spagna and the Trinità-del-Monti, near which is established (since 1702) the house of the Brothers of the Christian schools.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST SUCCESSORS OF BLESSED DE LA SALLE.
— BROTHER BARTHOLOMEW (1717-1720),
AND BROTHER TIMOTHY (1720-1751).

As the work of the Saints is sketched out for them by precursors whose action Providence has guided through the ages, so is that same work continued after them by successors who are also guided by God. The Saints survive their own lives.

Every Saint's life might be divided into three parts : the Saint before his birth ; the Saint during his life ; the Saint after his death.

Here again, Jesus Christ is the supreme type, imitable and imitated. The Incarnate Word was prepared during forty centuries ; His work and its influence will be continued to the end of time.

It was no slight responsibility to take charge of the Institute as successor to Blessed de la Salle; but we have seen that during his life time, from motives of humility as well as of prudence, he had confided to one of his disciples the government of the congregation. This measure was a wise one in every respect; it enabled him to judge of the organization of his foundation and of the working of its different branches. Let us add that the new Superior, chosen from among the Brothers, was worthy of the responsibility laid upon him; Brother Bartholomew was the living counterpart of the blessed founder, who, on learning his election, exclaimed— “ God be blessed ! nothing will be changed. ”

He possessed, in addition to a rare knowledge of men— that gift of all others— great personal holiness.

It often happens that souls in whom great gentleness appears to be the chief virtue are wanting in firmness; but such was not the case with Brother Bartholomew, who, to the meekness of a lamb could, when required, unite the courage of a lion. The Jansenists spared no pains to surround him and to gain him to their party, at the time when the struggle was at its height between truth and error; but their efforts were vain; with unswerving fidelity, he maintained that his Institute was and should ever be strictly “ Roman,” and neither the reproofs of certain bishops and priests, unfortunately misled by error, nor the open attacks directed by others against his Communities, could shake his loyalty to the Holy See. “ I bless God,” he used to say, “ that He has given me such strong aversion for novelties.” These last words exasperated the Jansenists, but they soon became convinced that their efforts were vain, and Brother Bartholomew will ever, in the history of his Institute, have the glory of having preserved it from the most insidious and dangerous of all heresies¹.

“ I so love peace! I so love union! ” Blessed de la Salle’s successor frequently repeated these words, and sought on all occasions to put them into practice in his government of the congregation. It was under his rule that a new house was founded at Saint-Omer, adding, as it were, another flower to a crown already so richly adorned. He continually recalled to the minds of his sons the

¹ Brother Bartholomew was a good and sound theologian, and he composed for his Brethren a treatise on the matters that were then so ardently discussed.

teaching of their founder, striving above all to penetrate them with his spirit; this was his only system of government. His zeal for teaching Christian doctrine, the object of the Institute, was so great that he would often stop the passers-by on the high roads and by-



Brother Bartholomew, first Superior general, born at Sains, diocese of Cambrai, February 11th 1678, entered the Institute February 10th 1708, elected Superior general May 23rd 1717, died at Saint Yon June 8th 1720.— Engraved by Méaulle, from a drawing by Moulleron.

ways, and speak to them familiarly of the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

His humility was no less striking than his modesty. Not only did he scrupulously ask the advice of the two Assistants, appointed to help him in the cares of government, but he treated the very novices with deference, and would gladly have obeyed them. Towards the end of his life, his deep humility became still more apparent; he

often knelt down before his Brothers and kissed their feet; his mind and heart seemed more and more fixed on the beloved memory of his holy Father— “ Let us imitate our Father,” he often repeated; and on his death bed he exclaimed with a radiant look of happiness: “ I see our Lady and our venerable Father who are coming to meet me.” Thus passed away the most humble, kindly, gentle Brother Bartholomew, first successor of Blessed de la Salle, on the 8th of June 1720.

A more arduous mission was that of Brother Timothy, elected as Superior general, the 7th of August 1720, and to whom Providence entrusted the task of obtaining for his congregation its official recognition by the Pope and the King.

It would be too long and wearisome to relate in their minutest details the various negociations undertaken by the Brothers to attain so important an object; it is sufficient to say that on July the 2nd 1725, a day memorable in the history of the new Congregation, the Chamber of Finance ordered that the letters patent of Louis XV., issued the previous month of September, in favor of the Institute, should be officially registered. By these letters, the King authorized the Brothers to live in the house of Saint Yon; he further gave them full liberty— “ to train subjects to teach in their charity-schools in the different towns of the kingdom; moreover, to open schools, where they should teach the principles of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman faith to the poor children of the said town, and of the suburbs and neighborhood of Rouen. They shall also teach reading, writing and arithmetic, the whole gratuitously¹.” Nothing can be clearer than these words, so fruitful in precious results. But the Pope’s Bull is a still more glorious testimony. Kings, however powerful they may be, address but one nation; the Sovereign Pontiff is universal and addresses the whole world.

We can hardly picture to ourselves in these degenerate days the effect produced by the voice of the Vicar of Christ, when, borne

¹ The King, moreover, permitted the Brothers to accept legacies and donations, and to receive in their houses boarders willing to come to them.

on the winds of heaven, it reverberated throughout Christendom, uttering these words: "We approve and confirm, by our Apostolic authority, the Institute and the Rule of the Brothers of the Christian schools."

This Bull— *In Apostolicæ dignitatis solio*, of January 26th 1725, is for the Brothers a patent of nobility of which they may feel justly proud. Why is it not read by those enemies of the Church who accuse us of having always hated the light and loved darkness? Why do they not, at least, read that magnificent protestation against "the countless disorders engendered by *ignorance, source of all evil?*"

The Brothers had an opportunity of manifesting their joy at the close of the general Chapter, when the election of Brother Timothy was confirmed on the feast of the Assumption 1725. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed in the chapel of Saint Yon. The representative of the Archbishop, clothed in the sacerdotal vestments, went up to the altar, and, turning to the Brothers, read to them, in a voice trembling with emotion, the Bull of Benedict XIII. All were in tears, and with the Divine Host unconsumed in their breast, they knelt on the steps of the altar, and pronounced the formula of vows as the Pope had prescribed it.

Supported on one hand by the monarchy, and on the other by the Sovereign Pontiff, the Institute of Blessed de la Salle was henceforth secure against all future dangers or alarms. But it is not sufficient that a religious Order should obtain the right to live, it must moreover prove itself worthy of this right, and such was the case with the sons of M. de la Salle.

Already, in 1722, during the terrible pestilence of Marseilles, which the heroism of M^r de Belzunce has made famous, the Brothers valiantly remained at their post, where several among them found a glorious death.

As often happens in the case of new religious Orders, the Congregation experienced, at the beginning of the government of Brother Timothy, a moment of arrest in its development; the number of masters was insufficient and there were few vocations. Soon, however, it seemed to acquire new life, and, in 1728, having repaired the forces of his little army, the Superior general resumed his struggle against ignorance. In the space of three years, from 1728 to 1731, ten new schools were opened in Picardy, Normandy,

le Perche, and Dauphiny. The twenty years that followed were no less fruitful, and between 1732 and 1751, sixty-two foundations were made in different parts of France.

On every side, Bishops begged the Superior general to send them



Brother Timothy, second Superior general, born in Paris, parish of Saint Severin, on the 14th of January 1682; entered the Institute the 24th January 1700, elected Superior general the 7th of August 1730, resigns his post as Superior the 3rd of August 1751; died at Saint Yon the 7th January 1762. Engraved by Méaulle, from a drawing by Moullicron.

Brothers. Schools were opened at Meaux, Valence, Mézières, Carcassonne, Arles, Privas, and Nantes.

Unfortunately, the new Institute had not only to struggle against financial difficulties; it had moreover to hold its own against the false philosophy of the eighteenth century, which, by the mouth-piece of Voltaire and La Chalotais, had succeeded in rousing popular

prejudice against what they termed— “the dangers of popular education.”

The beneficial influence of the Institute did not however confine itself to the foundation of elementary schools, and it is at this period that we first witness the establishment of those professional schools, so much the fashion in our days, and in which the Brothers have always been so successful. For instance, a superior school, founded for the express object of teaching all that is connected with trade, was established at Boulogne, in 1744.

During this time, elementary schools were being founded beyond the frontier, in the Duchy of Ferrara and in Lorraine, where Stanislas Leckzinski caused four to be established, one of which, at Maréville, was destined to receive youthful convicts and was organized on the model of Saint Yon. The house of Saint Yon, the real cradle of the Institute, absorbed a great portion of the time and care of the Superior general. He resolved to rebuild the Chapel, the former one being wholly inadequate to the necessities of the Community; the plan was drawn up and executed by the Brothers themselves, assisted by some of their reformatory boys. The two first stones were laid in 1728, by the Archbishop and by the First President of the Parliament of Rouen; but it was not before 1734, that the body of the blessed founder, which till then had rested at Saint Sever, was solemnly transferred to the new chapel. “The memory of the Servant of God seemed suddenly to revive in the hearts of all. The whole population of Rouen came out to meet the procession, which passed between two compact and respectful ranks of spectators. ‘A Saint! a Saint!’ was the cry that burst forth on every side. The Brothers had taken possession of the pieces of the first coffin, where the body had rested, and these relics were eagerly sought for. Sixteen priests then raised on their shoulders the new coffin, which contained the remains of one who was already honored as a great servant of God. The Brothers, holding lighted tapers, went to meet the precious relics of their father, and had the joy of hearing the priest who had assisted him in his last moments loudly exalt his charity, his zeal, his humility, those fruitful sources of all Christian virtues, which, by raising him above all things visible and fragile, made him live only to adore God, think only to pray to Him, speak only to praise Him, work and suffer only to possess Him.”

The examples left by the holy founder brought forth rich fruit in the souls of his disciples; but, in order to appreciate fully the hidden holiness of their lives, we should have to raise the veil of their humility, penetrate into their cells, and follow them through the daily routine of a life of toil.

Among other touching instances, let us quote as an example the history of Brother Ireneus, known in the world as Dulac de Montisambert, a brilliant officer of the regiment of Champagne, who, having been grievously wounded at Malplaquet, was converted by reading the Lives of the Saints and resolved to consecrate himself to God. He presented himself to M. de la Salle, and was admitted into the Congregation under the name of Brother Ireneus; but, fearing the regrets and reproaches of his parents, and fearful also of his own weakness, he carefully concealed the place of his retreat. His poor mother sought for him far and wide, till one day, remembering that he had neglected to pay certain debts he had made during his worldly career, Ireneus wrote to his father on the subject, and thus betrayed himself. His mother then wrote to him a letter truly worthy of a Saint:— “At last, my dear child, I have found you again, and for this I shall bless God all my life. May God strengthen you in the way of salvation. I am waiting for news of you, and I entreat of you, by the love I have always borne you, by all the tears you have made me shed, and that I am still shedding as I write, to give me tidings of yourself. If, however, you absolutely refuse to give us news of you, or to receive news of us, I will leave you in peace, though it would be a great consolation for me to converse with you sometimes.” The consolation she so well deserved was given to this admirable mother, and she had the joy of seeing her son again.

Brother Ireneus was for many years the Director of the novices, whom he trained with rare wisdom, prudence and gentleness. In 1747, Brother Ireneus died after a painful illness, during which he edified his Brothers by his patience and courage. An act of heroism is related of this holy soul, which strikingly recalls a similar act performed by St Elizabeth of Hungary, and alluded to by Père Lacordaire in one of his finest Conferences at Notre Dame. One day, while visiting a hospital, Brother Ireneus met a former officer, whose face was covered with a hideous cancer. He immediately took him in his arms and lovingly pressed his lips to the frightful wound!

On reading this touching incident, does not the exclamation—
Brother Ireneus, pray for us, come naturally to the lips?

Thus, one by one, the Brothers who had personally known Blessed de la Salle went to reap their reward. Brother Timothy himself, feeling that his strength was failing, begged to be relieved of his responsibility as Superior of the Institute. The Chapter assembled in 1751 accepted his resignation, and gave him as successor Brother Claude, formerly novice master at Avignon. A few months later, on the 7th of January 1752, Brother Timothy closed his holy and laborious career by a peaceful death.

We have now come to a point where, stopping in our course, we can look back upon the road along which we have travelled. The time seems far distant when the Institute, possessing only thirty-one houses, had neither the support of the civil power, nor the official approbation of the Church. A few years after the death of Brother Timothy, one of the enemies of the Order might with truth have exclaimed:— “The progress of the Brothers is alarming!” This exclamation, we can heartily echo, changing only the epithet— their progress is not alarming; but it is truly wonderful. In less than half a century, the sons of Blessed de la Salle have accomplished two great things, well worthy of praise:— “They have, on the one hand, preserved in its integrity the spirit of their founder, and, on the other, they have created all the types of popular education.” The elementary schools, as we have already said, and as we cannot too often repeat, are not their only work, and with that breadth of view, of which their founder left them the example, they have opened boarding-schools as at Maréville, circulating school-libraries as at Montauban, commercial schools as at Boulogne. They anticipated the progressive ideas of the nineteenth century in all that was best and most Christian. They were the first to inaugurate that scientific and professional education which, when it is based on religion, may easily yield such good results. This is a portion of what they have done, these incomparable men, toiling incessantly in the service of childhood and of youth, working quietly, unostentatiously, worthy imitators of that father who, for their glory and happiness, the

Church now raises to her highest honors, and bids all the world worship amongst the Saints of God.

The Archbishop of Sens spoke only the simple truth when he said, in 1745 :— “ The Institute founded by M. de la Salle is a holy congregation, which does good wherever it spreads. ” We can say no better ; this sums up all that can be said.



nobility, the court, the financiers; but these are seriously contaminated, and it is from them that all the evil is about to come. For short-sighted historians, the Revolution began on the 14th of July 1789; but for those who are clear-sighted, it was already far advanced in 1751; this was the period of what has been aptly termed "the spirit of the Revolution before the Revolution."

The Brothers had undoubtedly still against them the Protestants and the Jansenists. The Calvinists rose to the attack at Mens, near Grenoble, in 1754, and the Jansenists sent forth a cry of joy at Rouen, when they succeeded, in 1756, in extorting from the monarchy an enquiry into the house of Saint Yon. But how is it possible not to see that these were the expiring efforts of enemies that were already vanquished?

Jansenism and Protestantism were dead, although they still gave signs of life, and danger in that direction was over. The great peril was the Revolution itself, which was already begun. Brother Claude inaugurated his generalship with the triumphant reign of the man who was dubbed "King Voltaire," and who was at the same time the declared enemy of Jesus Christ and His Church, and the contemptuous enemy of the people. These make-believe democrats were, in the worst sense of the word, aristocrats, and no one dreaded more than they did the education of the lower classes. La Chalotais' words are well known, but they may be fitly quoted here: "Men who are only intended to handle the plane and the file ought not to be taught to read and write. The Brothers, by giving them education, ARE RUINING EVERYTHING."

Another sectarian of the same school, M. de Langourla, at Rennes, cried out in the same spirit of concentrated rage: "We must, as I said to the King, hunt out those *Ignorantins*, those Brothers with the long sleeves, that Jesus rebukes in the person of the Pharisees, for the rascals teach people to handle the pen, which is such a dangerous weapon in certain hands." This epitomizes the whole system: "No education for the lowly ones, in order not to trouble the scepticism and tranquillity of the happy ones of this world."

What could the Brothers do in the midst of such a society? They had but to preserve intact the work of their blessed founder, and, as far as possible, continue it. To the partisans of ignorance, they could reply that they gave faith as a counter-balancing power

for science, while the purity and austere simplicity of their lives was the most complete answer they could make to the depraved morals and abounding scandals of the age.

During Brother Claude's government, which lasted sixteen years, the Brothers only opened twelve new schools; they preferred to perfect the existing ones. This period seems to have been one of quiet work, during which nothing was changed in the admirable machinery set going by Blessed de la Salle. After Brother Claude, his successor, Brother Florence, was equally cautious of introducing any changes; his two principal administrative acts, the transfer of the Institute to Paris in March 1771, and its division into three provinces, were not really innovations so much as useful improvements.

To Brother Florence is due the credit of having understood that the Letters patent of Louis XV., which in 1724 had caused such joy to his predecessors, had become altogether inadequate, seeing that they only empowered the Brothers within the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Rouen. Louis XVI., solicited by the sons of Blessed de la Salle, granted them the same privilege in the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Paris, where the Brothers had no less than thirty-eight schools. It was in March 1777; this favor was not destined to profit to them long; but it gave the entire Order a considerable increase of importance, and remotely prepared its brilliant resurrection at the beginning of our century.

The Superiors broke down under the burden of their office, and all, one after another, were obliged to tender their resignation; an offer which the Institute felt compelled to accept. What Brother Claude had done in 1767, Brother Florence did ten years afterwards, and each had an equal right to claim a rest from crushing and almost superhuman labors.

But the clouds were gathering, and the sky growing darker, as the storm approached. This is the moment to take cognizance of the work and the men it is about to destroy.

The eighteenth century was for the Brothers the age of pedagogy.

They struck out then, as we have seen, into innumerable new pathes, which our age with all the unconsciousness of profound ignorance imagines it was the first to tread. It becomes necessary for us here to re-establish facts in their true position.

At a period when the children of the middle classes and the nobility were subjected to the sole and somewhat excessive severity of classical studies, the Brothers had the boldness to conceive and the hardihood to put into practice what we call to-day special and technical education. At Vannes, under the government of Brother Claude, classes of mathematics and hydrography are opened, here sailors are taught navigation and pilots are trained for their career.

At Cahors, a Brother teaches architecture and planimetry. In 1753, one of those drawing-classes, now all the fashion, was opened in Paris : “ The Brother will teach drawing gratuitously to the children, and will perfect them in the art as far as is necessary to enable them to embrace successfully these different professions which, for their full exercise, require clever designers. ”

At Castres, the programme of studies includes practical geometry, surveying, and double-entry book-keeping; at Cherbourg, horticulture and gardening are taught. We may notice here once more that our age vain-gloriously claims the discovering of these innovations, all the honor of which is due to the Institute of Blessed de la Salle. *Cuique suum.*

Nor is this all. To the Brothers is due the honor of having given to the boarding-school a larger, more generous and more intelligent form. If we look for an example of the types they have created, we need only point to that college of Fort-Royal at Martinique, concerning which so many valuable testimonies remain. Everywhere it is the same ideal, the same large and liberal plan of instruction, of convenience, of watchful care— vast buildings, fine grounds, promenades twice a week, neither the rod nor the ferula, moderate work, so that the minds of the children are not strained by over study. The Brothers, in their programme, foresaw from the first the dangers of that evil of modern education, overworked brains.

They have from the first also published excellent school-books, and will no doubt continue always to do so. Already Blessed de la Salle had invented the system of simultaneous teaching, and secured the adoption of books in the mother-tongue “ to teach the children

to read." But under the government of Brother Agathon, there appears a *Treatise on Arithmetic for the use of the Boarding-schools and the Paris-schools*, and a *New Abridgment of French Grammar*. Both of them are unpretending and indispensable master-pieces; they may have been surpassed since, but one is still astonished at the good sense that pervades them from beginning to end. Good sense is the chief weapon and the characteristic trait of the Brothers. At the end of the *Treatise on Arithmetic* there are models of bills, commercial letters, orders, bills of exchange, receipts; everything practical, in fact, and this practical side is one of the salient features of the Brothers' teaching. Their *Grammar* in those days was not, indeed, written according to the strict philological method; but we must remember that it was intended for children who did not know Latin, and that it will always be found difficult to apply the etymological system to works used by children and young girls. But the Brothers have in our days overtaken the last progress of philology, and the recent edition of their *Grammar* may on this head bear comparison with the best and the most learned treatises¹.

Despite so many successful innovations, the Brothers obstinately refused to change the gratuitous character of the schools. They fought many a good and noble fight on this ground. "The establishment of the Brothers," says one of their most inveterate enemies, "introduced and spread the principle of gratuity all over the kingdom, along with an education in which all classes and conditions may share²."

But all these details of method are but secondary, after all; it is education itself that occupies the first place in the minds of all Christian souls. The great heresy of the nineteenth century is to place the instruction it over-estimates, above the education it despises. The Brothers have never fallen into this fatal error, and never tire of reading the *Explanation of the Twelve Virtues of a Good Master*, in which Brother Agathon develops so profoundly the doctrine of Blessed de la Salle. This explanation is a whole treatise of Christian pedagogy, of which our modern masters would do well to assimilate the substance.

¹ The same may be said of the whole series of their works on mathematics, French, geography, history, drawing, a vast collection, and one held in high esteem by the best judges.

² Granet, lieutenant general of the seneschal's jurisdiction at Toulouse.

What the eighteenth century admired most in the Brothers was their virtues and the visible benefits of their mission. On this point there were no limitations, there was no indifference; the enthusiasm was unanimous.

Where could we study the influence of the Brothers better than at Rouen? It was from Rouen that they came; here was their Novitiate; here was preserved the spirit of their founder. It is at Rouen that their praise resounds loudest, and it is M^r de la Rochefoucauld, Archbishop of Rouen, who, on April 25th 1767, renders them the following signal tribute of justice:— “ It remains only to us to pray that God may preserve in the Religious of the Christian schools the spirit of their state, that holy fervor and strict observance of their Rule, that love of holy poverty and humiliations, that simplicity and modesty which have won them the esteem and confidence of the public¹. ”

We have under our eyes scores of documents of the same value, which we will not copy, for fear of tiring our readers. The Sovereign Pontiff has, however, condensed them all into a few words:— “ I have the highest possible regard for the Brothers. ” This testimony was pronounced in 1772 by Pope Clement XIV. It might be repeated to-day by Leo XIII.

¹ The holy prelate adds with eloquence: “ What is then grander than to preserve a Christian soul in its baptismal innocence up to manhood. There is not a Brother teacher who, if he be at all fervent, may not at the hour of death flatter himself with having done this for several souls. A preacher or a Doctor of Divinity, after fifty years labor, cannot, alas! be always sure of having obtained this result. ”



Massacre in the church of the Carmelite Friars, fac-simile of a rare print. — Drawn by Édouard Garneri; engraved by Rousseau.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREAT STORM : THE BROTHERS DURING THE REVOLUTION.
— GOVERNMENT OF BROTHER AGATHON (1777-1797).

WHEN the last echoes of the *Te Deum* had died away, and Brother Agathon found himself alone in his little cell on the evening of that memorable day, August the 10th 1777, and realized that he was now Superior of the Institute, the responsibility of his position must have stood out before him with terrible force. The perils that beset the Institute were imminent. There are signs that herald the approaching storm, which the sailor is never mistaken in; these signs were visible in 1777.

The Church is not afraid of the storm, and does not dread the thunderbolt; but she takes precautions on the approach of bad weather. Brother Agathon thought it was both useless and dangerous to tremble; but he made ready.

There was then only one scholasticate, that of Saint Yon at Rouen;

he created three others, at Marseilles, at Maréville and at the Rossignolerie of Angers; he considered that it was not prudent to leave the administration in Paris, so he transferred it to Melun. Always anxious to obtain publicly the support of the civil authority, he got Louis XVI. to extend the privileges of the Institute to the whole province of the Parliament of Toulouse, and took care to have these letters registered by the said Parliament on March 11th 1778; he went on fighting stoutly against the writing-masters, and asserting the principle of gratuitous education. All this was done without undue agitation, as is ever the case with truly Catholic souls and institutions. While the storm rages, they look to the blue sky that will follow after the tempest, and quietly prepare for the coming sunshine.

Brother Agathon, considering it a duty to gather up and condense the traditions of the Institute, published the *Explanation of the Twelve Virtues of a Good Master*, already mentioned, and which appeared in Rome in 1797 under the more pretentious title of *Manuale di Maestro di Scuola*.

Strange to say, the French edition of the *Twelve Virtues* appeared on the very eve of the taking of the Bastille; we call attention to these dates, which have an eloquence of their own. When the great storm burst, the Brothers were ready. The evolution of their pedagogy was nearly finished. Their class-books were in everybody's hands. Their primary schools, their professional and special schools were in full vigor and prosperity. According to statistics of 1778, they numbered seven hundred and sixty masters, who were directing one hundred and fourteen houses, four hundred and twenty classes, and thirty-one thousand children. Their discipline was incomparable, and everything in the order was wisely foreseen and regulated. They formed a kind of monarchy, Christianly democratic, with free and intelligent elections, wherein all the grades of the Institute were represented. The general Chapters were held with extraordinary regularity, like States into which neither passion nor party hatred penetrated. All was going well, and the Institute might have taken for its motto— *Ordo, lucidus ordo*.

Suddenly the cry resounded— “The Bastille is taken!” It was not a riot that had been put down, but a revolution that had been begun.

Step by step, inch by inch, the Institute resisted. It resisted

without violence, without declamation or uproar, but with indomitable and placid energy. Brother Agathon followed with intense anxiety the debates of the assemblies, and when, on the 13th of February 1790, the Constituant Assembly suppressed monastic vows, he took note of the closing sentence of that famous article 2 which rules that “for the present nothing is to be changed concerning houses charged with public education.” His brow cleared, and he exclaimed: “Then, there is nothing changed for us.” He forthwith sent up a solemn address to the Assembly in the name of the Brothers. Addresses were the fashion just then. This one was dignified almost to coldness:— “If you decide to suppress us,” it said, “we will submit to the law; but we hope with great confidence that you will not add to the pain of our political annihilation that of being reduced to want.”

Noble words, assuredly, but which could have no effect. ‘89 was advancing rapidly to ‘93, dragged down a fatal incline, as 1848 was afterwards dragged to the riots of June, and 1870 to the Commune. Such is the law of history, and there is no escape from it. There were moments of reprieve now and then, and the decree of September 26th 1790 decided that “Congregations and communities whose object was education will for the present continue their functions under the same laws and the former management. These revolutionists had not, in fact, masters ready to their hand, and were sadly at a loss to extend education to all classes of citizens; but hatred, at last, carried the day, and we know how they threw off the mask in their Civil Constitution of the clergy. The 22nd of March 1791 there appeared another decree in which the Brothers felt they were aimed at:— “No PROFESSOR can continue any function or fill any place in establishments belonging to public education, unless he have first TAKEN THE CIVIL OATH.”

We must say it to the eternal glory of the Brothers, they did not hesitate an instant about the taking of the oath; all answered— “No!” Everyone of them, heroically sincere, repeated with prophetic instinct the noble words of Brother Philip-Joseph: “Let us sacrifice everything, even our lives if needful, to obey the laws of our country; but let us stop where sin begins.” These words may be taken as the pure and true Christian formula; it would be impossible to find an expression at the same time more Catholic and more French.

On the 3rd of June 1791, the doors of the Novitiate of Saint Yon were broken open by the soldiery. Brother Quentin, who was Director then, replied quietly to the invaders : “ I will never take the oath because my conscience forbids it.” And he added—



Brother Agathon, 5th Superior general, born at Longueval, diocese of Noyon, April 4th 1731 ; entered the Institute October 20th 1747 ; elected Superior general August 10th 1777 ; died at Tours September 1797. — Engraved by Méaulle, from a drawing by Moufleron.

“ I do not fulfil any public function.” But the rioters were past listening to reason; justice had given way to violence. Violence, however, could not overcome souls so valorous and strong. The sixty-two Brothers of Saint Yon pronounced each the same emphatic “ No,” and declared their inviolable fidelity to the Church of Rome. The tyrants did not venture farther that day. The lawyer Boieldieu

wrote a long and able petition on behalf of the Brothers, and the district of Rouen sent up the affair to the Director of the department, which left the Brothers of Saint Yon free to continue their work “ until the National Assembly should have passed a decree concerning the fate of the Institute. ”

The party in power did not show the same moderation everywhere. At Rennes, the Brothers were thrown into prison; at Marseilles, the populace rose, and cried out for them to be put to death; at Melun, the Attorney general asked the Director of the department if “ these *amphibious* ecclesiastics had conformed to the law; ” at Rouen, Luneville, Rheims, Châteaudun, Nogent-le-Rotrou, Avanches, Moulins, Brest, Arles, the direction of the public schools is rudely taken from them. There was, indeed, no one to take their part in the Assembly, and their attitude before the Constitutional bishops was not calculated to disarm the Revolution. They did not recognize these *renegades*, and shut their doors against them inexorably.

The Brothers were persecuted in some places like their founder and like their Saviour, while in others the people venerated them and would not have them molested. “ Without the Brothers, what will become of the children of the poor? who will teach them? ” was the popular cry.

At Chartres, Saint Malo, Laon, Saint Brieuc, at Castres above all, this popular feeling was very strong; but it was unavailing. The Revolution swamped everything.

On the 18th of August 1792, the death-blow was dealt at the Institute. “ Considering, ” says the decree of the National Assembly, “ that a really free State cannot suffer in its midst any corporation, not even those which, devoted to public instruction, have deserved well of the nation, lay corporations, such as those of the Brothers of the Christian schools, are suppressed. ”

This was conclusive, and resistance was henceforth vain. The schools were now everywhere violently broken into, the Brothers flung out into the street, the children let loose, their books torn to shreds or burnt, alphabets destroyed, lights put out, and the reign of ignorance proclaimed. The Superior general quitted Melun in haste and withdrew to Paris. He was forced to take off his religious habit, and try to get bread by giving lessons. Yet what crime had this just man committed? He was, like so many others

at that period, "suspected of being a suspect," and consequently he was proscribed and run to earth. The Revolution had withdrawn the title of French citizens from the illustrious Benedictines of Saint Maur, who had done so much for the glory of France; and now the same Revolution hunted these humble Brothers, sprung from the people and of the people still, who were teaching forty thousand little French boys the elements of knowledge!

One trial, or rather one supreme consolation was still in store for the Brothers—the trial of blood, the consecration of martyrdom. It was not long delayed, and amongst the glorious victims of Carmel, there was a son of Blessed de la Salle. His name was Brother Salomon, and he had been secretary of the Superior general. This was a great glory for the Institute. In every Catholic foundation, there is this baptism of blood, and, without it, no foundation rises into an edifice. A miniature of the fifteenth century represents all the Saints working like masons at the building up of the Church. The blood of the martyrs was the cement.

Brother Salomon was not the only witness that God demanded of the Institute. Many Brothers were imprisoned, and the names of these captives are engraved in letters of gold on the wall of the Institute, and in letters of fire on the hearts of their descendants. These are to the Brothers what the diptychs were to the primitive Church.

The executioners, no doubt, felt they were inconsistent in striking down these popular masters, they who preached so loudly the education of the people; but we must not look for consistency in these terrible times. Other Brothers had the signal honor of shedding their blood with that of Brother Salomon. Brother Raphael, of Uzès, was seventy-two years of age when he was denounced. Denunciation was the characteristic of the Revolution. The poor old Brother was lying infirm on his bed; when he beheld his executioners, he exclaimed—"But, how is this? I see some of my old pupils amongst you!" And then he added—"Did I not sacrifice my days and my health for you? Do you forget how I taught you to love and fear God?"

But these generous words of recrimination only enraged still more the wretched madmen; they beat him to death on the spot.

Nor was this the last limit of their hatred: transportation then was worse than death. Worn out with slaughter, the sanguinary fanatics of the Revolution took it into their heads to get rid of the Christians who were in their way by transporting them as far off as possible. We shudder still to the very marrow of our bones in reading the accounts of the Brothers thus dealt with. “ We suffered almost all that men can be made to suffer. We laid on boards, piled up and huddled together till we could scarcely breathe. We had each barely two yards of space in length and about half a yard in width. The heat was so intense, that we seemed to be in an oven; we were devoured by vermine. We longed for death as for a mercy. To more than two-thirds of us was this deliverance granted¹. ”

Thus speaks Brother Christopher, confined on board the *Bonhomme Richard*. In listening to him, one’s blood runs cold with horror. They died, these gentle victims; they offered up their lives in those foul hulks. But martyrdom is not the only witness we can produce in favor of Truth disarmed and vanquished. There is also the testimony of words. This testimony is given by several Brothers who were imprisoned. There was at Rennes a Brother Martien who replied proudly to his judges :— “ I direct a free school. If your protestations of love for the people are sincere, if your principles of fraternity are not a vain and hypocritical formula, my functions justify me, and, far from being imputed to me as crime, they give me a sacred claim on your gratitude. ” In answer to this, he was executed. Perhaps neither ancient nor modern eloquence could produce a nobler speech than this one of Brother Martien’s, which he paid for with his life.

Soon after, they wanted to force a Brother to assist at the Revolutionary festivals; but with unflinching firmness he replied :— “ I am a good Catholic, and these ceremonies are an insult to our worship, which is Divine and thrice holy. God forbid that I should ever authorize by my presence ceremonies which I believe dishonorable to religion. I had rather suffer persecution, prison, death itself, than offend the Lord God and be a stumbling block for many¹. ”

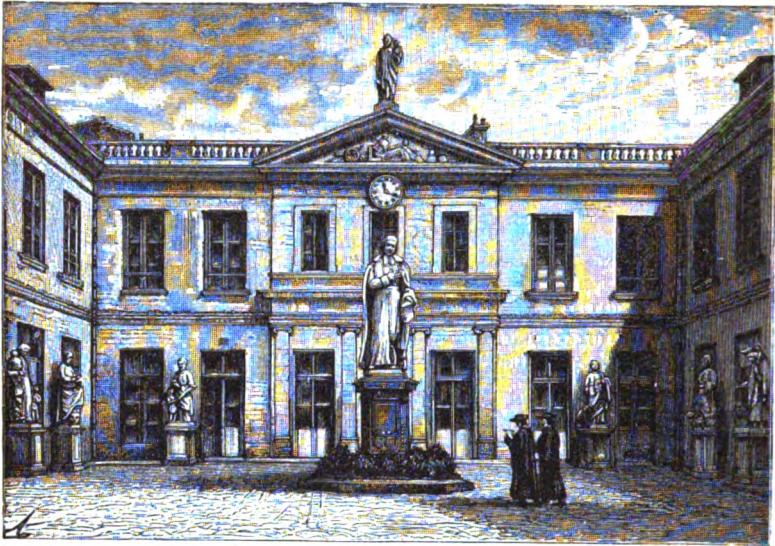
¹ *Annals of the Institute*, vol. II, p. 642. Letter of Brother Christopher and Abbé Bienaimé. Cf. the narrative of one of the captives of *The Washington*.

² Letter of Brother Philip-Joseph of Elbeuf.

If all true Catholics had had the courage to meet the Revolution as Brother Philip-Joseph met it, they might have checked its impious and triumphant course.

We are now in 1794, and the spectacle presented by the Institute is not a consoling one. The Superior general was in Paris, where under a secular disguise he gained a miserable livelihood by giving lessons in mathematics. All the Brothers are dispersed; there is no government, no centre; some have enlisted; others accepted public situations, the greater number were trying to turn to account their former occupation and to get work as public or private tutors. But the old times are all gone.

No more regular communities, no more schools on whose walls hang the Crucifix and the image of the Virgin Mother. Where are they all now, the little children who were trained to be strong Christians? What has become of the black gown, the broad brimmed hat, the white collar? Above all, what has become of the church where all heard mass on Sunday? All gone; all swallowed up in the night. Is it so? O men of little patience, wait yet a while. Do you not see a white streak on the horizon? It is the dawn of day.



Paris. — House of the Brothers at Rue Oudinot. — Drawn by Hubert Clerget; engraved by Barbant.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER THE STORM.

— THE INSTITUTE FROM THE END OF THE REIGN OF TERROR
UP TO THE ELECTION OF BROTHER PHILIP IN 1838.

WE have seen how the Brothers were forced to abandon their religious habit, and condemned, in order to live, to enroll themselves in the armies of the Republic, or to accept secular employment. Hunted and pursued everywhere, some had the happy inspiration of going to join the community in Rome; but, in those days, the journey was a long and costly one, and this was an alternative within the reach of only a few. It was as teachers that the Brothers had rendered service to the public, and this resource they still held. The black soutane was wanting, it is true; but in the secular dress they were equally capable of continuing the traditions of Blessed de la Salle. Thus we see them courageously beginning to open day-schools and boarding-schools again to the great joy of

the populations which had remained Christian. But no one could tell what was going to become of the Institute.

The year 1795 opened, therefore, sadly enough; but here we must



FIG. VI. — Drawn by Édouard Garnier, from a portrait of the time; engraved by Napier.

consider it under another aspect, one which deserves to be closely studied by historians in search of truth. There was a general revival of Christian feeling, and the inhabitants of several thousands of communes demanded energetically the re-opening of their

churches. These petitions, covered with signatures, are still preserved in our archives, and they are very significant. With the churches, the schools were opened, and the people wanted them to be Christian. This was the moment to remember the Brothers and call out for them. Now it was that, supported by the prayers of the martyrs it had given to the Church, and strengthened by the example of their self-sacrifice, the Institute was enabled to gather its scattered members together, resume its mission of charity, and spread itself over the world.

We have said that a certain number of Brothers had become public teachers, and it is thanks to them that the faith was preserved by the new generation. They had kept the traditions of the Institute, and made it their duty to teach Christian doctrine before anything else. Sometimes even, they supplemented, as far as was possible, the ecclesiastical ministry, which the priests who had not taken the civil oath—the *insermentés*, as they were called—could not perform. Thus Brother Bernardin, at Castres, collected the faithful every day in the church, and recited morning and evening prayers; every Sunday, he read the mass aloud to them, and made them sing canticles, and addressed a little discourse to them, endeavoring to rekindle the light of faith in their poor benighted souls. The Brothers, in a word, helped them to wait for the return of the priests, acting, so to speak, as the precursors of the latter.

But, all this time, they were without tidings of the Superior general; consequently the Institute, as yet, had no visible head. Under these conditions, unity was impossible. Pius VI. understood this, and displayed in the emergency that wonderful clear-sightedness which has always distinguished the government of the Popes. In the place of Brother Agathon, he delegated provisionally, in 1793, Brother Frumence, Superior of the house in Rome; but, mindful of established rights, the Sovereign Pontiff only attributed to him the title of Vicar general. Brother Agathon, wherever he was, remained the real Superior. The Institute was saved.

Brother Agathon had been obliged to take refuge at Tours, and to remain there several years. As soon as he heard of the decision of the Pope, he wrote to Brother Frumence, and begged of him to replace him until circumstances would permit of his returning to



Brother Frumence, Vicar general, born at Mosnil-Martinsart, March 30th 1747; entered the Institute October 30th 1763; named Vicar general by Pius VI. August 7th 1795; died at Lyons January 17th 1810. — Engraved by Méaulle from a drawing by Moulleron.

his post. This return was a hope destined quickly to perish. The severe hardships which Brother Agathon had undergone had ruined his health, and he died in 1797 before witnessing the reconstitution of the Institute. He saw the promised land, but he never reached it.

Brother Frumence continued, consequently, to direct the In-

stitute, but always with the title of Vicar general. It was not until 1810 that Brother Gerbaud was named Superior general.

According, however, as tranquillity returned, and the Church re-opened her temples, the Brothers collected here and there, re-organizing their old communities at Lyons, Rheims, Laon, and Paris. This was, in truth, the essential thing to do, and the Brothers saw this clearly. To create little centres which could be successively linked on to the general Vicariate, such was the plan wisely conceived, and faithfully carried out.

This activity was nowhere more necessary than in Paris, and the Brothers understood as much. Brother Gerbaud, Director of the school at Gros-Caillou, succeeded in getting the school approved by the First Consul, and this was an advance of which few realized the importance at first. It needed time to manifest the wisdom of it.

All these efforts were, nevertheless, condemned to remain barren unless the Congregation could be reconciled to the civil power. Its whole future lay here. Taking advantage of the influence of Cardinal Fesch, the uncle of Bonaparte and a particular friend of the Brothers, Brother Gerbaud strove to get its existence once more recognized. He wrote to Brother Frumence, who joined in his efforts, and in December 1803, thanks to the intervention of the Cardinal, a decree given on the strength of Portalis's report "re-established in France the Brothers of the Christian schools," and authorized them to fix their head quarters at Lyons. This decree brought the Institute back to life.

The city of Lyons showed itself worthy of the honor which the First Consul paid it when he chose it for the seat of the Congregation. Appreciating at their just value "these Brothers of the Christian schools so renowned for elementary education," it immediately took advantage of the good dispositions of the government to organize new schools, and develop the germs of the little community which Brother Pigmenion had re-organized.

There was something very touching in these new beginnings of schools at Lyons. Brother Pigmenion was a manly soul whom nothing disheartened. He knew that those works most blessed by heaven are generally marked with the sign of the Cross, and it was in this spirit that he courageously opened his school at Lyons, May 3rd 1802. The beginnings were very hard. When the brave teacher found the work pressing too heavily on his unaided strength,

he would cheer himself up with the reflection : “ God will send me some fellow-workers as soon as He sees they are necessary. ” And so it was. The fellow-workers came, and soon after they were allowed to resume their religious costume.

Pius VII. was sitting in the chair of Peter, and the beauty of his holiness was a light to all Christendom. His firm and tender soul had to struggle, not alone against the Revolution, but against an almost omnipotent despotism. First, he was flattered in order to lure him to Paris to crown the new Emperor. Pius VII. thought that it was his duty to place the crown on that formidable brow. He quitted Rome, and, passing through Lyons, remained a few hours in the old city of Gaul which had been ennobled by the blood shed there by Irenæus and Blandina. Then, after being acclaimed by the Lyonese, he pursued his way to Paris, where he was to crown the Sovereign who then seemed full of deference for him as head of the Church. On his return to Italy, Pius VII. had more time to devote to Lyons, and profited by it to visit and bless the house of the Brothers, whose Vicar general had gone to France in his suite. But we should read the memoirs and newspapers of the period to form an adequate notion of the enthusiasm provoked all over France by the mere sight of the Sovereign Pontiff. The terror and the sacrileges of the Revolution were scarcely over; these Christians, only yesterday pursued and persecuted, were suddenly permitted to see the Holy Father and to receive him with festive joy. For the Brothers, it was a kind of double resurrection, for the Institute rose up again from the dead with religion.

On the 8th of September 1805, they put on once more their religious habit, and the Institute resumed by degrees its progressive march.

What they wanted now was subjects which would have enabled Brother Frumence to respond to the demands that were coming in from different cities. This was now his chief pre-occupation. It was a great problem to be solved, but Providence helped them to the solution. Cardinal Fesch, full of solicitude for an Institute so useful to religion, had the happy inspiration of writing to all the Brothers who had been dispersed by the Revolution, and inviting them to return to the bosom of their old religious family. Nothing could have been more simple, or more efficacious than this measure. Many Brothers knew nothing about the re-establishment of the

Community, and received the Cardinal's invitation as a joyful surprise. "My children," said a teacher to his scholars in the hamlet of Chatuzange on receiving the letter, "I was a Brother of the Christian schools, and it was with deep regret I found myself compelled to leave my vocation. I hear that our Institute has been re-established, and therefore I must make haste to Lyons and take back my place there. If amongst you there are any who would like to enter the Institute, I will do all I can to facilitate their admission, and to help them to become accustomed to the new life." We merely quote these words as an example and a specimen. Similar ones were pronounced in many places. Numbers replied to the Cardinal's appeal. Not content with bringing to Brother Frumence their own zeal, several inspired young men whom they had educated with the desire to embrace the same religious vocation.

Brother Philip, whom neither France nor the Institute can soon forget, was one of the disciples of the master whose words we have just quoted. Surely the harvest reaped from the sowing of these words has been rich and abundant.

Lyons remained still the seat of the Institute. It was here the new recruits crowded; it was from here they were sent forth to all parts of France. The unity of the Institute was reconstructed. In becoming again one, it became again great.

It now became possible to satisfy the municipalities who, according to a magistrate of 1806, "were eagerly demanding those teachers who directed the schools before the Revolution." In the month of December 1805, thirty-six towns had made the same demand. From 1805 to 1807, Chartres, Trévoux, Saint Étienne, Ajaccio, Besançon and Saint Omer, together with two parishes in Paris, were able to get Brothers to direct their schools. The hive of Lyons was sending forth swarms of bees in every direction.

Meantime, the Imperial government was preparing a scheme of general education which was to modify the position of the Congregation. On the 10th of May 1806, a law was voted ordering the formation, under the title of the Imperial University, of a body charged exclusively with public teaching and education throughout the whole Empire. The promulgation of this law is one of the most important facts of the nineteenth century. The Institute of the Brothers was destined to be seriously affected by it.

The Council of State proceeded at once to study the decree which

was to regulate the character of the new institution, and the discussion raised on the subject brought out proofs of the lively interest which Napoleon took in the Brothers. "Some persons pretend," he said in a sitting of the Council, "that the primary schools kept by the Brothers might introduce a bad spirit into the University, and want to have them left outside its jurisdiction. I can't understand the kind of fanaticism that seems to possess certain persons against these Brothers; it is a pure prejudice. From all sides people are calling out to me for their re-establishment, and this general demand proves how useful they are." The decree was not definitively promulgated till the 17th of March 1808, and article 109 runs as follows:— "The Brothers of the Christian schools are patented and encouraged by the Grand Master, who will sign and approve their internal statutes, admit them to the oath, prescribe a particular habit for them, and overlook their schools. The Superiors of this Congregation may be members of the University."

On the 7th of January 1810, this holy Religious, who had been charged by Pius VI. with the government of the Institute during the period of the Brother's dispersion, was called to his reward.

Brother Gerbaud, who, on the morrow of the Revolution, founded the Gros-Caillou school, and had been one of the most active promoters of the re-establishment of the Brothers in France, was elected Superior general in 1810. This election took place on the 8th of September, the day the Church celebrates the Nativity of Our Lady, and sings, before the *Magnificat*, that glorious anthem:— "Thy Nativity, O Virgin Mother, has announced joy to the whole world." The Institute of the Brothers, which had just come to life again, responded abundantly to the hymn of joy.

The Gros-Caillou school, where Brother Gerbaud has left such lasting remembrances, was the first opened in Paris by the Brothers after the restoration of Catholic worship. The history of this school alone would make a beautiful book. It was founded by the marquise de Villeneuve-Trans, who, in 1793, was rescued from the scaffold by the good population of Gros-Caillou, and desired to give them this public proof of her gratitude.

At Brother Gerbaud's installation, the Institute comprised about thirty-six communities. During the last years of the Napoleonic dynasty and the first of the Restoration, Brother Gerbaud was in

constant anxiety, and was constrained to use every lawful means to save the young Brothers from military service. After many consultations, and through the influence of MM. Mac Carthy, de Villeville and de Bonald, a favorable solution of the vexed question was



Brother Gerbaud, sixth Superior general. born at Bréhéville, diocese of Verdun, December 21st 1760; entered the Institute May 1st 1778; elected Superior general, September 8th 1810; died in Paris, August 10th 1822. — Engraved by Méaulle, from a drawing by Moulleron.

obtained. The most honored Superior, who had learned in the midst of these difficulties to appreciate to its fullest extent the peace and quiet of humble positions, sought to resign in the 13th general Chapter. But his firmness of character joined to his affability of manner had created too favorable an impression, and he was obliged to continue in office.

In 1819, Louis XVIII. expressed the desire that so useful and important a Congregation should have its headquarters or mother-house in Paris. Brother Gerbaud assented to the change. It is evident that out of Paris there can be no centre for an Institute like that of the Brothers, which, for one reason or another, requires continually to be in relation with the government. Important business must be transacted personally; letters cause too much delay. In Paris, also, the bishops of France are to be met, and likewise the bishops of other nations: it is here consequently that the Brothers find facilities for discussing with the prelates of Christendom the grave question of the foundation of Christian schools in their dioceses. Paris, next to Rome, glories in being the noblest centre of Catholic life.

In order to establish the principal seat of the Institute in Paris, a vast building was necessary, and Brother Gerbaud cast his eyes on a house formerly inhabited by Doctor Dubois, in the Faubourg Saint Martin. The municipality adopted this proposal, and the Council general of the Seine supported it before the Minister of the Interior.

Unfortunately Brother Gerbaud had not sufficient ready money to defray the expenses of moving to the new abode. The minister flatly refused to allow any subvention¹, and it was not until 1821 that the Régime was able to be transferred to Paris, never again to leave it.

At the same time that the Institute was being definitely settled in Paris, it was busy spreading its houses through the cities of France. Five and twenty foundations of schools during the year 1819, and sixteen in 1820 attest its onward march.

But Brother Gerbaud was not long to survive these constant struggles so valiantly supported. He was taken away from the Brotherhood on the 10th of August 1822. The last days of his old age were cheered by the spectacle of the flourishing condition of his Order. He had powerfully contributed to its prosperity. He had preserved it from the new methods; he had secured its fertility by rescuing it from the rigors of the conscription; he restored it to

¹ In 1822, the government decided on coming to the assistance of an establishment that trained masters who rendered such services to the youth of France, and a sum of 6,300 francs was granted by the Minister of Interior "to help in the repairs to be made in the central House of the Brothers."

Paris, its true and normal centre. Such were the three achievements, the three glories of his generalship. He was succeeded by Brother William of Jesus.



Brother William of Jesus, seventh Superior general, born at Carcassonne, February 7th 1748; entered the Institute June 16th 1763; elected Superior general November 11th 1822; died in Paris June 18th 1830. — Engraved by Meaulle, from a drawing by Moulleron.

Brother William of Jesus had been fifty years a member of the Institute. In 1810 the Superior general said of him : — “ No one could be humbler, gentler, wiser, more prudent, more submissive than he, more worthy, in fact, to fill the first place. ” He came to fill it on Brother Gerbaud’s death.

His generalship lasted eight years, and they were years of tran-

quillity and hope. Few Superiors had a calmer period to pass through. And yet the same obstacles and perils were always to be feared and guarded against. The conflict with the mutual system lost nothing of its first bitterness, and the Brothers were called upon to show the same indomitable firmness under Brother William, which they had displayed under Brother Gerbaud.

Two great events mark the new superiority. One was the creation of a Normal school of Masters by the Brothers. In this school, founded at Rouen, the Brothers undertook to train secular masters, and this service the government imitated later on. But there was something more important even than this. The spiritual sons of Blessed de la Salle resolved to found boarding-schools for professional and commercial studies. This had been one of the ideas of their founder, it was a line that he had marked out for his disciples, and we may remember that in the eighteenth century they had already carried out the idea very successfully.

The Brothers anticipated the majority of the so called inventions of modern pedagogy; we have proved this more than once, and the fact must strike the most prejudiced judges.

Thus it was that, thanks to the generosity of Abbé Martin, pastor of saint Aphrodise, at Béziers, the famous boarding-school was founded in that town. Two Brothers had opened a school there towards the end of November 1820; but it was not until 1828 that Brother William was able to take the necessary steps for founding the boarding-school. He began by asking permission to receive the legacy of Abbé Martin, who had died before the realization of his pious purpose. The authorization was not given until August 24th 1819, when a Royal decree was granted conformably to the advice of the Council of State. Brother William of Jesus had, therefore, the joy of seeing this important foundation receive the official consecration he had solicited for it. He died on the 10th of June 1830, a few months after the signing of this authorization; but he had enjoyed the pure and modest glory of its initiative, and had deserved well of the Institute.

His successor was Brother Anaclet. The government of the Institute devolved upon the new Superior at a very critical juncture. The triumph of the liberal party had roused all the dormant revolutionary passions. People do not, in general, form an adequate idea of what these years 1831 and 1832 were : they were a period of anxiety and upheaving. The executive was not strong enough to suppress these insurrections that were constantly putting the country in danger. The pillage of the Archbishop's palace proved this. The Brothers naturally experienced the effect of this movement, which bore everywhere a distinctly anti-religious character. They could not be popular with the people who sang the execrable songs of Beranger. A great number of their schools were deprived of their grants, and eleven of them had to be closed.

The Brothers revenged themselves for all the harassing vexations to which they were subjected, by extending their benevolent influence in every direction. At this period they founded a work of unspeakable value in the cause of popular education— night-schools for adults. These useful foundations soon attracted the attention of M. Guizot, who offered to second the charitable zeal of the Brothers in this direction.

These night-schools were a great success, and there is not a town in France which has not opened some for the young men of the working classes. In Paris, there must be at least two hundred of them. The Brothers had the first conception of the work, and were the first to start it. M. Guizot, in his loyal impartiality, would have publicly acknowledged this. It is said that he one day put questions to the pupils of the Brothers in the History of France, and the immortal author of " The History of Civilization " was very genuinely astonished by the excellent answers of the children. He congratulated them, as he knew how to do, and no praise was ever more fully appreciated or better deserved.

The Superior general carried out an idea of Blessed de la Salle's for re-establishing the Preparatory Novitiates of which we have had occasion to speak at the beginning of the history of the Institute. The pupils admitted into these houses are young men who aspire to the admirable career of the Christian Brothers. Their education is finished here, their vocation is carefully examined,

and they are by degrees initiated into the religious life. If they persist in their desire to join the congregation, they make excellent recruits; if the trial is not crowned with success, the education they have received has fitted them for some other more congenial calling.



Brother Anaclet, eighth Superior general, born at Sirod, diocese of Saint-Claude, January 8th 1788; entered the Institute on June 30th 1805; elected Superior general on September 2nd 1830; died in Paris September 6th 1838. — Engraved by Meaule, from a drawing of Mouilleron.

The zeal and virtues of Brother Anaclet won universal admiration, and M. Guizot, who was a judge of merit, wished to fasten the cross of the Legion of Honor on the breast of that valiant champion of education; but the humility of the Religious shrank from the honor. He aimed at a higher reward, one that God alone

could bestow, and a premature death was soon to bring him the crown he coveted. He was only fifty years of age when the Brothers lost him.

It may be well to pause a moment in presence of this early grave, and on the threshold of Brother Philip's long reign, and consider what has been done by the various Superiors to whom the direction of the Institute was successively entrusted. Such retrospects are useful, and sometimes have an eloquence of their own.

Under the Vicariate of Brother Frumence, the scattered Brothers were gradually gathered together, and a centre was created for the Institute at Lyons.

During this same Vicariate, the revived Brotherhood of the Christian schools was blessed with a special blessing by the Sovereign Pontiff. One step more in advance, and the Brothers, recognized by the State, were permitted to resume their religious costume. They were but few in number, and needed recruits. An appeal to the dispersed Brothers soon refilled their houses. The Brothers were incorporated with the Imperial University, and found in this dependance, which seemed fraught with danger to them, certain guarantees for their present existence, and their approaching prosperity.

To Brother Frumence, Vicar general, succeeded Brother Gerbaud, a Superior general who continued manfully the tradition of his predecessors before the Revolution. The struggle against the mutual schools fills a portion of his life — a hard struggle, a struggle for life and death, from which he emerges victorious. Then, with the question of military service come new battles and fresh victories. Finally, he accomplishes the return of the Institute to Paris, its ancient centre, and its essential one. Such was the work of Brother Gerbaud, and it is hard to conceive a finer one.

With his successor, Brother William of Jesus, comes the foundation of the normal school at Rouen and the creation at Béziers of

a boarding-school copied on those of the eighteenth century, and which is to serve as a model for scores of others.

As to Brother Anaclet, we have assisted at the various phases of his government. Loyal and luminous competition with the lay masters, opening of night-schools and Preparatory Novitiates—three works that crown him with glory before God and men.

The Institute never flags in its march onward and upward. Every year of its existence is marked by some new creation, some bold and practical pedagogical innovation. And yet, for all its vitality, new dangers threaten it. The Revolution never disarms, and heavy clouds are gathering on the horizon.

It was under this lowering sky that Brother Philip received the burden of superiorship from the Institute.





The Brothers on the ramparts : Paris, 1870-1871. — Drawn by M. de Bellée ; engraved by Méaulle.

CHAPTER V.

BROTHER PHILIP.

BROTHER Philip, the living and complete representative of the Institute in our age, was born on the 1st of November 1792, a few months after the martyrdom of the two first Brothers who fell victims to their fidelity to the Church— *Sanguis martyrurum, semen Christianorum*. He came of a line of mountaineers, and had inherited all the qualities of that austere and vigorous race. His parents were humble laborers of the hamlet of Gachat, in the commune of Apinac, in the province of the Loire. Christians of the old block, they had remained staunchly attached to their faith, and sheltered the priests who had refused to take the civil oath. When any one on the mountain was dying and wanted the last sacraments, the priest knew where to look for a guide, and, if needs be, a defender; Peter Bransiet was always to the fore. Matthew Bransiet grew up amidst scenes that recalled the lives of the early Christians. He could realize what the catacombs were.

Before he was seventeen, he, who was one day to be Brother Philip, felt himself irresistibly drawn to the Institute of Blessed de la Salle. The priesthood alarmed his humility, he only considered himself fit to wear the coarse habit of the Brothers. In 1809, he entered the Novitiate of Lyons, under the direction of Brother Emery, whose sanctity shone out over him. Then God brought him in contact for a time with Brother Gerbaud, who was directing with such energy and wisdom the school at Gros-Caillou. Brother Gerbaud was a master mind, and he left his stamp on the young Brother of whom it was already being prophesied :— “ He will be Superior of the Institute one day. ” Brother Philip did not remain long in Paris; his superiors thought fit to employ elsewhere his fine intellect and ardent zeal. As he was a good mathematician, they sent him to profess mathematics at the coasting school of Auray, where he passed many happy days not far from the sanctuary of St Anne. He was so precociously ripe for the direction of souls, that they all surnamed him the “ young old man. ” He was successively Director at Rethel, at Rheims, in the Community of Saint Nicolas-des-Champs in Paris, everywhere upholding the traditions of the Institute, fighting against the Lancastrian schools, forming excellent pupils, writing his first books, notably his *Practical Geometry applied to Linear Drawing*, and already appointed to the Inspection of all the “ Congregational ” schools in Paris. When, after the Revolution of 1830, the general Chapter elected Brother Anaclet superior, Brother Philip, then eight and thirty years of age, was named one of his four Assistants.

Finally, on the 20th of November 1838, the votes of the Brothers confided to him the supreme government, which he exercised for thirty-six years, a longer reign than any of his predecessors had had since Blessed de la Salle.

The eminent persons who, in their intercourse with Brother Philip, so often had occasion to appeal to his wisdom and experience, always admired his rare intelligence, his lofty views, and his genius for administration. “ There is the making of a minister in that man, ” was the judgment of a statesman. And yet these brilliant qualities which dazzled all who approached him were but the external reflection of his beautiful soul. To understand what its interior beauty was, it would be necessary to interrogate the Religious who shared his life, who had every day under their eyes the

proofs of his spirit of faith, his charity, his love of the Rule, his love of work, his humility, his piety; it would be necessary to collect his circulars on fidelity to the Rules of the congregation, on holiness, on union amongst the Brothers, on their mission to the young. Such a direction, exercised throughout a long term of years, was calculated to develop powerfully the progress of the Institute.

Under Brother Philip, those fertile institutions, the boarding-schools, spread considerably. What, during the last three centuries, the Jesuits did for the children of the nobility and the higher middle classes, the Brothers have done for the lower middle classes, and especially for those innumerable children whose families intend them to embrace commerce, agriculture and trade. I repeat it, we do not half realize the advantages France owns to the powerful initiative of Blessed de la Salle and his spiritual sons. The law of 1833, inspired by the example of the Brothers, developed the programmes of primary education, and the Institute took advantage of it to found numerous houses similar to those which had been so prosperous before the Revolution. Thanks to Brother Philip's zeal, there soon arose the fine boarding-schools of Toulouse, of Lyons, Saint Etienne, Nantes, Dijon, Bayonne, and finally Beauvais, to which latter was added a model farm, an other and very happy innovation.

Brother Philip soon had an opportunity of proving the rare proficiency he had acquired in pedagogical matters. When the law of 1850 was in course of preparation, he was called to form part of the extra-parliamentary commission that was charged with drawing up the plan of the new organization. His colleagues received with respect the lessons of his experience. This law of March 15th 1850 is undoubtedly one of the most important of our age, and it had very happy results. The text voted by the National Assembly bore the stamp of genuine liberalism. While remaining subject to the diploma of capacity, the Brothers had full liberty as to the choice of methods, and were dispensed from the military service on condition of "engaging themselves for ten years in the service of education."

In works that are blessed by God, trials are only an encouragement from above to the workmen. Their zeal does not flag under the difficulties of the task. Not satisfied with sending forth Brothers to every point in France, Brother Philip was spreading them



Brother Philip in the last years of his life, from a portrait preserved at the mother-house of the Institute.
— Drawn by Sellier; engraved by Barbant.

broadcast over Europe. In London, the Brothers have won for themselves recognition as educators. In Vienna, they have the direction of the grand Imperial and Royal Orphanage. At Turin, over three thousand five hundred children crowd to their schools. They are to be met in Switzerland, England, Prussia and Austria. Belgium, which received them in 1814, continues to draw upon their self devotion, and confides to them primary schools, and schools for adults, boarding-schools and normal schools. The ancient castle of the Dukes of Bouillon, at Carlsbourg, is in 1844 placed at their disposal, and they establish there a normal school and a boarding-school destined to train pupils for the government schools.

In Ireland, a teaching congregation, founded by M. Edmund Rice in 1804 under the name of Christian Brothers, has been governed by statutes borrowed from the Rule of Blessed de la Salle. Before adopting these statutes three of their members passed some time at the mother-house, then in Rue Faubourg Saint-Martin, in order to familiarize themselves with the mode of life and the methods of teaching practiced by the older Congregation, and ever since the two families entertain for each other mutual affection and respect.

The Brothers cross the seas, and carry the method of the humble Canon of Rheims to all parts of the universe. These pioneers of civilization, as a traveller has called them, are working for the regeneration of the East, teaching the lessons of the Gospel to the children of those ancient Christendoms of Africa and Asia Minor, our elders in the faith.

In Algiers, they are one of the most efficacious elements of civilization. The Brothers landed there in December 1853, and soon spread from Algiers to Oran, to Blidah, to Tlemcen, to Constantine, to Milianah, to Mostaganem and Stora. In Tunis, they are encouraged by the Bey, and many hundreds of children knock every morning at the door of the Christian schools. In Alexandria and Cairo they have free schools for catholic children, and boarding-schools open to Mussulmans and schismatics. In Constantinople, right in the heart of Islamism, they have one of their largest boarding-schools, that of Kadi-Keui, and three groups of schools at Pera, Galata, and Saint Esprit. Nor does their march eastward stop here; at the conquest of Cochinchina, they were called to the new

colony, and settled at Saigon and at Mytho in 1866, at Vinh-Longh in 1869.

This was not the first time that they carried Christian education



Gregory XVI., from a contemporary portrait. — Drawn by Édouard Garnier; engraved by Huyot.

to such distant shores. In 1816 they had already gained a footing in the island of Reunion. But it was above all under the generalship of Brother Philip that their influence developed in that island, where eighty-four Brothers are at this present day working for the

regeneration of the blacks by means of primary schools and classes for adults.

Their mission was no less fruitful at Madagascar, where they served as useful auxiliaries to the Jesuits of Tananarive, and were extremely popular with the natives. The sad events which of late years have disturbed the unfortunate country have dispersed the little Christian settlement; but Brother Raphaël, a native of Madagascar, was able to remain in his country, and continue as far as he could the admirable work of our missionaries.

But it is chiefly on the vast American continent that the Institute, transplanted from France, has developed most prosperously. The first soil which received this Christian seed was in fact a second France, for as such is Canada known. On the 22nd of January 1838, a school was opened at Montreal, where it soon won general favor. In two years, it counted five and twenty Brothers, and eighteen hundred pupils. Other centres of education were founded at Quebec and Three-Rivers, and then the Brothers, spreading their ramifications beyond Canada, invaded, so to speak, the United States, where their growth was rapid and extensive. They soon established themselves in Baltimore and New York, and covered the free soil of America with Catholic schools. In a word, their houses in North America were so numerous, in 1863, that Brother Philip was obliged to divide these new conquests into two provinces, one in Canada, and one in the United States. Each of these two had henceforth its own Novitiate, and the future seemed secured.

This conquest was achieved by a man having in him the stuff that makes great heroes and great Saints. Born to rule, large of heart and broad of mind, a man inspired by the zeal of the Apostles, indefatigable in his exertions, traversing the New World from the Saint Lawrence to the gulf of Mexico, wherever he went he won respect and esteem for the Brothers' habit. He established a numerous family which was his glory and his consolation to the day of his death— a family that loved him as a father and that still cherishes his memory with filial affection and veneration. That man was Brother Facile. His bones now rest in honor among the children of his heart. He left behind him in Canada and the United States in 1861, sixty-eight schools, two hundred and fifty-nine classes, twenty-four thousand five hundred pupils, three hundred

and sixty-eight Brothers and seventy-four novices. Brother Facile has assuredly deserved well of the Church.

The needs of souls vary with countries, and an institution which extends over the whole world must necessarily have a certain elasticity in its mechanism and organization. In America, priests were few and greatly wanted; it was essential, therefore, that the programme of education given by the Christian schools should bend itself to the cultivation of ecclesiastical vocations, and the Brothers had to make certain modifications in their method. Hence it is that the Brothers in the United States conduct a certain number of schools imparting a secondary and higher education. There was another class of children in America who required altogether different training. Beside the primary schools, the Brothers had to open work-shops for a multitude of poor little outcasts who were brought up by sectarians in hatred of the Catholic religion, and whom the Archbishop of New York resolved to save by appealing to the charity of the Brothers. In this way began the famous Protectory of New York, an immense refuge for forsaken Catholic children, and which, like Saint Nicolas of Paris, includes both school and work-shop. In less than ten years, from 1863 to 1872, six thousand children were taken in here, and nearly a million and a half dollars expended.

It is impossible to pass over unmentioned that little republic of Ecuador that is so proud of possessing Christian schools, and that city of Quito where Brother Albanus died, a martyr to his zeal. When it was announced to him that he was going to die, he exclaimed—“ Since I have been in Ecuador, I have always received Communion as in Viaticum in order to prepare myself to die.” Death has no terrors for such a man.

This rapid glance at Brother Philip's work can give no adequate idea of his wonderful activity. We may say of this elect soul that he considered it his duty to continue all the undertakings of Blessed de la Salle in the spirit of their founder. And there is perhaps nothing more difficult than to preserve the primitive spirit of an institution, while accommodating it to the requirements of another age.

Brother Philip possessed this rare power. The primary schools, the schools for adults, the boarding-schools, the professional schools, the preparatory novitiates, he contrived to preserve them in all their

original spirit and original features, and there are few orders in the Church which have undergone so few changes as the Institute of the Brotherhood. All these works are, nevertheless, essentially modern; they are of the nineteenth century; but we have given but a cursory sketch of them; to realize their extent and value, we should quote nearly all Poujoulat's admirable book on this great soul. We have borrowed traits from it; but the whole should be read by those who wish to know Brother Philip¹.

The history of these foundations has brought us down to that fatal year, 1870, and we have now to relate what befell the Institute during the Franco-German war.

A few words of preface may not be out of place.

The Brothers believe that during these evil days they did their duty; their duty, and nothing more. If you venture to compliment them on their manly and courageous conduct, they reply with sincerity and modesty: "Every body in France behaved well, and we did like every body." They will add, if you try to draw them out on the subject, that they are above all the instructors of the children of the poor, that this is their first duty, and that their devotedness in 1870 was happily an exceptional fact in their lives, as in that of the Institute. We will let them return to their labor of love in the schools, and continue our narrative.

When the thunderbolt fell upon France in 1870, she sent forth a supreme appeal to the self-devotion of all her sons. The Brothers of the Christian schools were not deaf to this cry. After having taught thousands of children how to live worthily, they were now going out to the field of battle and the ambulances to teach them how to die nobly. At the beginning of the war, Brother Philip offered all his houses to receive the wounded, and answered for the zeal of his Brothers. This was a new mission for them; but they did not hesitate, and during long months they remained faithful to duties for which they had volunteered without preparation. Whenever the scourge of war passes, they are to be seen at the side of the

¹ *Vie du Frère Philippe*, par M. Poujoulat. Tours, Mame, 1880.

wounded, and, after spending their days hard at work in the schools, they pass their nights in helping the dying.

It was in the East of France that the devotion of the Brothers found its first theatre. The houses of the Institute at Mézières, Etain, Rheims, Châlons, Rethel, and Donchery, were from the month of August filled with the wounded. Then, according as the rising tide advances, they multiply asylums where their charity finds abundant work. The school of Mer, in the county of Loir-et-Cher, receives the wounded who fell before Orleans, and Brother Abercien-Joseph, stricken with disease, dies the victim of his self-imposed devotion. The ambulances of Chartres were, from the 10th of December to the 27th of February, served by the Brothers. At Bapaume, they were to be seen bending over the wounded soldiers of Faidherbe's army. At Coulmiers, at Alençon, at Dreux, at Dijon, at Pontarlier, they went about the battle fields in search of the poor soldiers that were riddled by Prussian bullets. Obeying only the inspiration of charity, they braved the perils of the battle without being sustained by the fever that burns in the combatants. This was their reply to the cowardly charges brought against them by certain penny-a-line pamphleteers.

Nor was it only on the theatre of war that the patriotic devotion of the Brothers manifested itself. All the cities were eager to help those poor sons of France who were suffering for her, and they found in the Brothers ready and valuable auxiliaries. At Lyons, Toulouse, Marseilles, Nantes, Nimes, Cherbourg, Saint Malo, Cambrai, Montluçon, Marlioz, they are to be found in hastily mounted but well organized ambulances, receiving the wounded, dressing loathesome wounds, and consoling the agonies of the dying. At Besançon and at Clamecy, they nursed the sick stricken with small-pox and typhoid fever, and braved this new danger to which Brother Benouien fell a victim at Rethel, and Brother Honorius a martyr at Clamecy.

Who can tell how many wounded men owed their lives to the intelligent care of the Brothers, and to that affectionate watchfulness by which so many poor sufferers were surrounded? Who can tell, above all, how many of the dying had their last moments soothed by the words of hope and charity murmured in their ears, and by the faith which forced them, as it were, into the arms of a God too long forgotten?

A few passages from the letter of a Brother of one of the ambulances brings before us the memory of scenes that were enacted daily in every hospital ward :— “ Several of the wounded have died in the ambulance after thirty or forty hours’ horrible suffering; they nearly all had bullets in their breast. It was necessary to speak to them of God, and, from motives of delicacy, the chaplains scarcely ever made the first advance. In spite of my unworthiness, God sometimes made use of me to open the way to reconciliation. I approached the patients with reserve and charity, and I easily gained their affection. When the moment seemed to me propitious, I would say gently :— ‘ Since our good God did not let you be killed on the field of battle, don’t you think it would be a good thing if you were to prove your gratitude to Him by *scouring the pot* ? ’ I used this expression with the soldiers, as I knew they liked that kind of rough and ready way of talking. Some would answer ‘ yes ’ at once; others would hesitate and wait. Then I used to pray to God, and return to the assault. Nearly all of them went to confession and Holy Communion. ”

This letter is dated from Paris. It was, indeed, in Paris more than anywhere else that the abnegation of the Brothers was displayed. The community of Rue Oudinot formed a little army in itself, and, with Brother Philip as its general, it won the purest glory in the battles of charity. We can fancy the ambulance with all the picturesque details of its heroic scenes— the wounded brought in on litters, the moving to and fro of a well-kept hospital, the little iron beds with their white sheets, the young Brothers with their Geneva badges, administering medicine to the sick and the wounded; the elders directing, and the crucifix looking down on it all, and giving to the scene its profoundly Christian character. It was truly beautiful.

On the eve of the supreme struggles that were to honor the resistance of the capital, the ambulances of the Press had the happy idea of proposing to the Brothers to serve as *Brancardiers*, litter-bearers. The word *brancardier* was almost unknown, but, thank to the Brothers, it has become genuinely French. The Superior informed his children of this proposal of the Paris ambulance, leaving them full liberty as to the answer they should make.

The Brothers did not hesitate an instant.

On the morning of the 29th of November, the day fixed for the

attack on Champigny, one hundred and fifty of them were collected before day-break on the Quai de Billy, near the Champ-de-Mars, drawn up in line, like soldiers waiting for the order to march. The attack, as we know, was put off, and it was only on the morrow that the Brothers were enabled to inaugurate their new mission. But the delay did not cool their ardor. They were taken in vehicles to the edge of the battle-field, and they set to work at once. The hour was a solemn one.

Neither the whizzing of the bullets, nor the crash of the shells frightened these humble Religious, fresh from the quiet of their communities. Accustomed to do all things with order, and to obey without discussion, they acquitted themselves of their new duties as if they had been used to them all their lives. They went in amongst the soldiers, and rushed to the spot where the firing was hottest. The moment a man fell, they were at his side, raising him tenderly, laying him on a stretcher, and carrying him gently to the ambulance. Then they came back quietly to their post of charity to wait under the fire of the enemy for fresh wounded.

A Brother was shot in the arm while carrying away a soldier, but he did not drop his burden; he went on with it to the ambulance, and then went back to fetch another. This time a shell burst and hit him in the leg; he pulled out his handkerchief, tied up the wound, and went on with his holy task as if nothing had happened.

The Brothers went forward so recklessly under fire that the officers were obliged to check them. "Stand back, Brothers," cried general Ducrot; "you are too near, there is certain danger in standing there." They drew back reluctantly. When night interrupted the fighting, the Brothers were rallied to be taken back to Paris; but all had not been warned of this, and some of them slept in the bivouac with the soldiers, or continued to search in the dark for the poor sufferers who might have been overlooked. Fancy the horror of a night spent in scouring the frozen country, and feeling the corpses to see if any life still remained! An ocular witness of the mournful scene alone could describe it :—

"The man who was driving my carriage was afraid (it is the Brother Director of Montrouge who writes), and his horses would not advance. I left them on the road, and with a lanthorn in my hand, I hurried along through the woods, the fields; but I met nothing but corpses. I called, I listened; but the silence of death

reigned everywhere. At last, I went to the crackling fire where our soldiers were bivouacking, and there I heard that, towards the end of the day, several wounded had been carried up to a house left standing on the heights. Men found in the ditches behind some slope, at the foot of a wall where they had dragged themselves to die, were waiting there, calm and resigned, until help should come. Amongst them was an honest Vendean whom I recognized. He had been wounded the day before, at nine in the morning, and it was I who had picked him up, and placed him in the ambulance cart. A movement of the troops and the overcrowding had caused him to be forgotten. What must the poor lad have suffered on the edge of that ditch where he had been lying all day! There were twenty one of these unfortunate fellows. Happily Providence had not sent me to their rescue alone; two other ambulance carts had preceded mine. We placed them in these as gently and comfortably as we could, and then set off. Our vehicles went one after the other. On the top of Joinville a Prussian shell burst close to us, and put out our lamps, but luckily did not hurt us. At half past four in the morning, we were in Paris in the Rue Saint Antoine, hunting for quarters for our twenty-one wounded; but all the ambulances had been filled the night before. We found a place for them, however, and then I set off again to Champigny. But what had become of the unfortunate wounded whose cries for help had gone through me, and whom I had not been able to find. I went on to the plain of Noisy, and there more than eighty frozen corpses proclaimed against the cruelty of our enemies. Some had died in horrible contorsions, tearing the earth and pulling up the grass around them; others were awfull to see with their eyes open and their hands clenched, as if threatening; some, with their hands raised to heaven and their features quite calm, announced that they had passed away resigned and peaceful.”

Two days after this, the battle began again, and the Brothers were there, courageous, indefatigable. There was but one voice in their praise:— “One of the great subjects of conversation amongst the soldiers is the conduct of the Brothers. These men in black who, calm and stoical, come and go amidst the bullets, and save our wounded, are the admiration of our soldiers. These two hundred Brothers have, indeed, set a great example of courage. More than ten times our generals have had to force them to wait till the firing

ceased before they went to pick up the wounded." Such was the language of the whole press the day after Champigny. We have only quoted one journal.

When the fight was over, and our poor soldiers, heroically vanquished, were compelled to see that they could not cut through the iron wall that barred their way, it was time to think of burying the dead, and it was to the Brothers that this task fell. For two long days, they never ceased taking up the bodies on which the snow had thrown a white pall. They lifted them piously, placed them in carts, and then laid them reverently in the deep trenches that were destined to receive the remains of these brave men who had fallen in defence of France. The ghastly labor was still unfinished when the evening of the second day closed in; they were obliged to continue it by the light of the torches that flickered over the field of death. It was far on in the night when the Brothers, spent with fatigue, were able to finish the vast funeral. When the plain was at last cleared of the dead that had been scattered over its surface, when the frozen and mutilated bodies had been laid to rest, the Brothers knelt down, and their voice, broken with tears, murmured a farewell prayer for the departed ones.

Scarcely had a fortnight elapsed when the battle of Bourget gave the Brothers a fresh opportunity of proving their patriotism. On the 21st of December, they were to be seen at the most advanced points of the French lines, waiting to carry off the wounded, ready to succor the dying. But at Bourget they were destined to be more severely tried than at Champigny, or, to use more Christian language, better rewarded.

As soon as the firing ceased in the direction of Courneuve, a detachment of Brothers was sent on the ground where the furious fight had lasted for several minutes. The flag of the Convention of Geneva was being carried before the ambulance men, when suddenly a volley was fired from the Prussian ranks. One of the litter-bearers fell with a bullet in his breast. His name was John Baptist Baffie, in religion Brother Nethelme. He was carried at once to Saint Denis; but the surgeons declared the wound was mortal.

Far from frightening the Brothers, this glorious event excites them. The most perilous posts are the ones they try for, and the medical men are in admiration of the zeal, skill and courage of their new auxiliaries. Doctor Ricord, who did so much for the ambu-

lances, is never tired of expressing his admiration for the Brothers. On the evening of the battle of Bourget, he met Brother Assistant : — “ My dear Brother, ” he said, “ how is our dear patient ? ” — — “ Badly, Doctor, very badly ; we have very little hope. ” — “ Brother, ” said the Doctor with emotion, and holding out his hand, “ is one ever allowed to embrace you ? ” — “ There is nothing in the Rule against it. ” — “ Then, permit me to have the honor of embracing you. You are admirable, you and yours. Take this kiss from me to Brother Philip and all your Brothers, and tell them that we all thank you, in our name, and in the name of France. ”

On the 22nd of December, a new battle saw the brave litter-bearers and ambulance men at their post, intrepid, silent and simple. Whilst they were braving the fire, their Brother Nethelme was consummating his sacrifice in the most atrocious sufferings. He expired holily on the 24th of December. An immense crowd attended his funeral, wishing to pay a last tribute to the martyr, and to do honor to the Institute which inspired its members with such modest and noble self-devotion.

A few days later, the same crowd followed with sentiments of still deeper piety the biers of five poor children of Saint Nicolas who had been killed by the bursting of a Prussian shell in their dormitory.

We will not enumerate the services rendered by the Brothers during the combat of Buzenval, that supreme but fruitless effort of Paris besieged ; but we cannot pass over in silence the inexhaustible charity which they practised in those ambulances of Paris into which the wounded were carried. After having, at the very beginning of the war, sent infirmarians to the ambulances of the Eastern and Northern Railway stations, Brother Philip offered the mother-house of Rue Oudinot to organize a vast military hospital where, as we have seen, the wounded were most tenderly cared for by the Brothers. The Doctors who directed this blessed asylum again and again expressed their gratitude to these intelligent assistants :— “ It is impossible, ” said Doctor Horteloup, “ to find more zeal and more abnegation than they display. ”

The infirmarians of the ambulances had their martyr as well as those of the battle-field ; Brother Berrier, aged nineteen, fell a victim to typhoid fever contracted in nursing the sick. God alone knows which of the two martyrdoms was the most glorious.



The Brothers during the war of 1870-1871, at Bourges. — Brother Nethelme mortally wounded.

The service of the pavilions built at Longchamp for the ambulances of the Press was confided to the Brothers. Here, after the armistice, they continued to take care of many unfortunate victims of the last battles who were nailed for a long time on a bed of suffering, and they would have carried on their charitable ministry to the end, if the leaders of the commune had not brutally driven them away. The sick and wounded wept bitterly when their kind nurses were torn from them.

After bravely taking their part in the war, the Brothers were to undergo new trials under the reign of those madmen whom God, for two months, allowed to be masters of Paris. The Brothers of Menilmontant, seized when teaching in their school, were kept in prison, and subjected to all manner of insults and threats. These holy Religious were pursued on all sides in order to be enrolled in the ranks of the insurgents; six and twenty were taken and shut up at Mazas with the hostages. It was by chance that they were not included in the massacres that stained the last days of May, and terrified the world.

Brother Calixtus, Assistant, remained at the mother-house during those terrible months of April and May, which perhaps have not their parallel in the history of any people. As early as the 11th of April, "a commissary and a delegate of the Commune, accompanied by some forty national guards, surround the house of Rue Oudinot, and declare that, in default of the Superior, they have orders to arrest whoever represents him. Brother Calixtus presents himself; all the Brothers want to go with him. The crowd gathers in the street, giving signs of grief and indignation; the national guards themselves are moved to tears, and at last Brother Calixtus is set at liberty.

When order was re-established, France wished to show her gratitude to an Institute which has served her so well. The French Academy had to discern a prize offered by the city of Boston "to the finest example of patriotism which had been given during the war." The choice of the Academy fell upon the Institute of Blessed de la Salle. No one in France was more surprised at this than the Brothers.

Doctor Ricord, who had seen the Brothers at work during the dark days, wished also to pay his tribute to them now that peace had returned, and, as a new year's gift for 1872, he wrote a frank

and charming letter to Brother Philip :— “ Go on; continue your beautiful mission. You will not always fall upon ingrates. Many will remember that you taught them their first letters, the first correct and proper word of their language, and the first prayer they addressed to God.” This passage, which we extract from the surgeon’s letter, is better than many diplomas ¹.

It was now, too, that Brother Philip was forced to accept the cross of the Legion of Honor. It was very hard to conquer his modesty; but at last an argument was found which overcame his noble resistance :— “ It is the Institute of the Christian Brothers that is being honored in you, ” they pleaded. And Brother Philip yielded.

These unanimous testimonies of admiration for the Brothers went deep into the heart of the Superior general; but another and more precious consolation was reserved to his old age : he had the joy of seeing the progress which the cause of the holy founder of the Institute was making in Rome. This cause had been begun in 1835; on the 8th of May 1840, Gregory XVI. declared the founder of the Christian schools VENERABLE. Three and thirty years later, on the 1st of November 1873, appeared the decree which declared that “ John Baptist de la Salle had practised the great Christian virtues in a heroic degree. ” Things are not done hurriedly in Rome. Those three and thirty years were as a minute there.

¹ Paris, January 1st 1872.

To the very honored Brother Philip, Superior of the Communities of the Brothers of the Christian schools.

Very honored Brother,

Here you are henceforth quiet, after so much fatigue, and after having run so many dangers. You and the good Brothers of your community are at last restored to your quiet life so full of charity; you have got back your children, the children of the people that you so patiently instruct.

Go on, continue your beautiful mission. You will not always make ingrates. Many will remember that you taught them their first letters, the first correct and proper word of their language, and the first prayer they addressed to God.

Yours ever,

RICORD.

Brother Philip was called to Rome to assist at the solemn glorification of his predecessor, and Pius IX. received him with that smile which illuminated all Christendom during the longest and most glorious of pontificates. They had together some of those interviews which are not revealed; but we may guess what passed between the great Pope, accustomed to govern men, and the aged Religious accustomed to govern children who were one day to be men.

After having assisted at the first triumph of John Baptist de la Salle, and discussed the great business of his Institute with the Sovereign Pontiff, Brother Philip had to tear himself away from Rome to return and end amidst his children his life of sacrifice and love. No one ever left Pius IX. without a pang, and Brother Philip felt this pang. "The Holy Father," he wrote home, "permitted us to kiss his hand, and having given us his blessing for ourselves and the whole Institute, we again prostrated ourselves three times before him. The moment was full of deep emotion, above all for me, who said to myself: 'Alas! is it not for the last time?' When one has been received with such kindness by so great, so magnanimous, so illustrious a Pontiff, by the Vicar of Jesus Christ, one cannot leave him without bedewing the ground with tears."

This presentment of the holy Religious was but too true. He had but few remaining days to occupy himself with his communities, his dear novices and his schools.

On December 31st 1873, although very poorly, he received the deputation of the pupils of Saint Nicolas for New Year's Day, and said a few words to them which may be taken as the last will and testament of a man whose entire life had been so nobly devoted to popular education:—"My dear children," he said, "I thank you for putting yourselves to the inconvenience of coming out so early to wish me a happy New Year. Perhaps I shall not see the end of it.—I am touched by the sentiments you express, and I form only one wish for you, that is that you may advance in virtue. Continue to serve God well; this will be the way to be happy in this world and in the next.—Love your parents, who make such sacrifices for you. Love the dear Brothers, who devote themselves to your interests and your future, and remember their good advice all your lives. Adieu, my dear children!"

On the 1st of January, he wished to assist once more at mass and go to Holy Communion in the midst of his Brothers. It was the last



Pie IX., who gave so many proofs of deep and unfailing affection to the Institute
— Drawn by Thadée; engraved by Parlet.

time he appeared amongst them, the last time he occupied his stall and knelt in his accustomed place to receive the bread of the strong. When mass was over, he went back to his cell at the request of the Brother Infirmarian, and lay down, never to rise again. On the 6th of January, his condition grew alarming. He received his God with fervent piety, and the Vicar of Christ sent a blessing to the dying man whom he remembered having clasped so lovingly to his heart. Brother Philip died on the 7th of January.

In the Institute of the Christian schools there is one word which the Christian Brother, even in his agony, responds to with alacrity : “ May Jesus live in our hearts! ” — He answers : “ Forever! ” And this may be considered his pass-word on the threshold of eternity. Towards eight o'clock in the morning, Brother Irlide, Assistant, bent over the Very Honored, and pronounced these words of Jesus on the Cross : “ My God, I commend my soul into Thy hands! ” Then he added : “ May Jesus live in our hearts! ” Brother Philip, like a soldier who answers faithfully to the roll-call, tried to reply : “ Forever! ” but, in making the effort, he expired.

As soon as the sad news was known in Paris, it was followed by an outburst of grief and sympathy which proved eloquently how deeply the holy Religious was loved. During the two days that preceded the funeral, the chapel where the mortal remains of Brother Philip lay, was besieged by a pious crowd who wanted to look once more upon “ the Saint. ”

On the 10th of January, the lowly hearse which bore him to his last resting place was accompanied by a vast concourse of people. Men of all classes and conditions held to assisting at the funeral of the illustrious old man who had labored so long in the service of the Church and of France. It was one of these manifestations which reveal the secret of a whole nation's heart; it was a noble concert where each one, obeying the dictates of his heart, came spontaneously to join in the song of praise and gratitude.

The generalship of Brother Philip may be taken as the most august type of the whole order. It includes every form of self-devotion, and the complete realization of all the views of its holy founder, even those which he had never been permitted to carry out to their perfection himself. Such a life is a monument which, despite the evil days we are passing through, will endure as a long and glorious testimony.



New York, where the Brothers direct the *Protectory* and several schools.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRESENT HOUR.

BROTHER John Olympe, who succeeded Brother Philip, only governed the Institute one year. But a great joy illuminated this too short generalship : a beautiful monument was erected at Rouen to the memory of the holy founder of the Institute. Too many statues are raised now-a-days, encumbering the public squares and seldom either beautifying or dignifying them. Amongst these stone trophies some are put up in honor of unknown men, mediocrities, corruptors of the people. It is one of the abuses of the age. But it is a genuine consolation for noble hearts to see, placed upon a pedestal, the figure of a man who deserves universal esteem. Such is the feeling experienced by every honest soul on beholding that bronze statue of Blessed de la Salle, which is not one of the least ornaments of the fine old city of Rouen.

In 1872, the idea of paying this solemn tribute to his memory was

started, and the approbation of the municipality and the government having been obtained, a committee was formed under the patronage of Cardinal de Bonnechose. From every country where the disciples of the holy man have carried his blessed influence, subscriptions



Brother John Olympe, tenth Superior general, born at la Chapelle-des-Bois, diocese of Besançon, July 4th 1813; entered the Institute June 17th 1837; elected Superior general April 9th 1874; died in Paris April 17th 1875. Engraved by Méaulle from a photograph of F. A.

flowed in. The poor gave their mite with the rich man's generous offering, all testifying to the immense popularity which the Brothers and their work deservedly enjoyed. The result was a large sum whose moral effect was excellent.

Blessed de la Salle is represented in the act of teaching the elements of Christian doctrine and the principles of human science

to two children : one, of seven, who has just come to the school; the other, a lad of fifteen, who is about to leave it, and make his entry into the world, where he will have to take his place in the struggle between good and evil. What the artist aimed at representing in the statue, a work of great power, was the supernatural devotedness of Blessed de la Salle to the mind and soul of so many millions of poor children. No one ever loved the people more than he did; no one ever exemplified more perfectly these words of the Master :— *Sinite parvulos venire ad me.*

The square of Saint Sever, which the Blessed de la Salle had so often crossed in his daily rounds, was chosen as the spot best suited to be the site of this monument to his memory.

The ceremony of the unveiling of the statue was performed in the midst of an indescribable manifestation of popular enthusiasm, on the 2nd of June 1875. The Archbishop of Rheims and seven other Bishops had assembled with Cardinal de Bonnechose to glorify the memory of this humble priest who had so loved the people. Deputations were sent from all points, while the presence of all the magistrates of the city, and an enormous affluence of the population, made of the event a solemn tribute to the memory of Blessed de la Salle and his disciples.

The new Superior had not the consolation of assisting at this festival; he only witnessed it from on high. Brother John Olympe, ripe for heaven, died almost suddenly in the month of April 1875.

Brother Irlide, former Director of the boarding-schools of Toulouse and Bayonne, then visitor of the district whose chief town is Bayonne, was named Assistant in 1873. His experience of business, his wide information and his judicial knowledge made him a valuable chief for the congregation. In 1875, he succeeded to Brother John Olympe.

Faithful to the traditions of Brother Philip, he held to carrying on all the undertakings of his illustrious predecessor. But these works were manifold, and amongst them were some that the new Superior naturally preferred to others. It was to the preparatory novitiates that he chiefly devoted his zeal. He gave a new development to this

institution, which is so essential for the recruiting of the Institute. He drew up a special rule for it, taking his inspiration from the book written by Blessed de la Salle. Brother Irlide reaped the reward of his solicitude. The number of little novices, which was one hundred and fifty when he took the reins of the Institute, had increased to thirteen hundred when he died. Another diadem in his crown, and a measure which has greatly aided in giving a new religious impulse to the Congregation, was the introduction of the Exercises of St Ignatius during thirty days for all the professed Brothers of the Institute, and for those on the eve of making their profession. Brother Irlide continued at the same time to scatter the seed of Christian doctrine in distant lands. By his care were founded the house of Jerusalem, the Novitiate of Ramleh, the schools of Jaffa, Caïffa, Trebizond and Erzeroum. The Institute was progressing steadily.

For many years, the Superior general's dream was to introduce the Brothers into Spain, and during his sojourn at Bayonne, he had cleared the way for the advance of the Institute into that most Catholic country. In 1876, the desire of his heart was realized. He opened a house in Madrid, and thence the schools of the Brothers continued to spread through the Catholic kingdom. These remote interests did not abate his watchful care of the schools of France, nor the improvement of the methods.

The extraordinary success of the Institute at the Exhibition of 1878 was the occasion of a new appeal from him to his Religious, stimulating them to go on and improve, advancing from better to better. It was, indeed, well that the excellence of the teaching in the Christian schools should strike all observers, for a fierce and implacable warfare was about to be declared against them.

Brother Irlide bore up against the attack with indefatigable ardor. The times were evil, and the Revolution had thrown off its mask. Under the perfidious name of secularization, it was about to make a new and powerful attempt to snatch youth and childhood from Christ. Such an attempt, if it proved successful, was certain to be, humanly speaking, more fatal to the Church than all the persecutions and bloodshed of 1793. The Superior of the Institute saw this very clearly. He saw also that the Catholics of our day were called upon to carry the war into the enemy's country, and that in pedagogy, as in everything else, it behoved them to stand higher

than their adversaries. In science, in letters, in higher education, secondary or primary, everywhere and in all things they should be the first.



Brother Irlide, eleventh Superior general, from a portrait which belongs to the Institute.
— Engraved by Huyot.

Brother Irlide had a long experience of scholastic affairs, and treated the principal questions raised by secularization in a series of articles whose conclusions received the sanction of the Council of State several times. He appealed with scientific strictness to the text of the laws and decrees, and pleaded in the interests of the

schools, as well as in the name of common sense and equity. He drew up several notes on the legal existence and civil personality of the Brothers, and his arguments were so cogent, that the Council of State unanimously recognized the legitimate rights of the Institute to its prerogatives.

Hardly had it won this triumph, than another grave question was raised by the municipality of Paris. The Council wanted to turn the Brothers out of their house in Rue Oudinot. Brother Irlide returned to the charge, and exposed the obligations which the city had incurred by its contract with the Institute. The Council of State, convinced by the solidity of his arguments, decided that the settling of the conflict belonged to the civil tribunals.

Providence, amidst these hard trials, raised up powerful protectors for the Brothers. Pope Leo XIII. continued towards them the benign affection of Pius IX., and was carrying on the cause of Blessed de la Salle's beatification. The learned Cardinal Pitra, who had been named protector of the Congregation near the Holy See, considered this patronage one of his first and dearest duties. The Bishops of France were no less earnestly preoccupied concerning the destinies of the Institute, both in defending it against fresh persecutions, and in hastening the honors that Rome was about to render to its holy founder. Cardinal Langénieux continued at Rheims the generous traditions of Cardinal Gousset, and M^r Thomas, at Rouen, those of Cardinal de Bonnechose. The excellent Viscount de Melun was a noble representative of the secular element in this group of patrons and friends, whilst the wise and holy Cardinal Guibert gave to all the prelates of France an example of devotedness that never faltered. In the Chamber, too, eloquent and courageous voices were raised on behalf of the Brothers, and it would be unjust not to point out here to the gratitude of all Catholics that indefatigable orator who, for twenty years, has been every day and all day on the breach, heroically defending Catholic interest. A just posterity will place him by the side of Montalembert. It is not necessary to name M. Chesnelong; but we held to paying him this tribute of respect, though it be so far beneath his worth, his talent and his faith.

Another consolation for Brother Irlide was the second centenary of the foundation of the Institute of the Brothers, which was kept with an enthusiasm and spontaneity as gratifying as they were un-

looked for. The Superior general had intended to celebrate the event as a family festival; but in every country where the Brothers



Leo XIII., happily reigning, under whose pontificate Venerable de la Salle was proclaimed "Blessed."
— Drawn by Thadée; engraved by Méaulle.

are established, Catholics seized with avidity the opportunity of manifesting their gratitude to Blessed de la Salle.

This tribute of esteem was universal. In every country where the black robe of the Brothers is familiar, the outburst of sympathy

was sincere and fervent. The concert of praise had arisen at Rouen in 1875, but it was echoed now all over the Christian world. In Paris, the seat of the Institute, in Rheims, the birthplace of Blessed de la Salle, in every diocese of France, the same joy was manifested. It was an œcumenical feast.

The difficult circumstances in which the Institute was placed added a heavy extra weight to Brother Irlide's burden. He ended by breaking down under it. Calmly and with a steady hand, he addressed a circular to the Brothers, arranging for a meeting of the general Chapter to elect his successor. Having finished this letter, his strength rapidly declined, and he died on the 25th of July 1884.

Brother Joseph was elected to succeed to him. It will be understood why we are silent on the threshold of this generalship. The only homage which the new superior consents to accept from us is a faithful account of the state of the Institute at the present time. We shall endeavor to give an accurate and animated description of its situation.

“You will judge of the tree by its fruits.” Those words of Christ are eternally true, and may be used as an epigraph for the last chapter of every book which gives the history of a political institution, or a religious order. What are the fruits of the tree planted by Blessed de la Salle? This is the question we are about to answer, and that answer shall be the conclusion of this work.

The Institute extends at the present day over the five parts of the world, and it would take a very long time indeed to render an exact account of its existing condition and results.

Let us start from the mother-house of Paris. This house is a little world in itself, a calm, well regulated world, which makes us think of God. In the first court, we see Oliva's statue of Blessed de la Salle. Our thoughts are attracted to the holy founder by it at once, and its air of majesty is not unbecoming a Saint. In the vast and lofty parlor, we see that master-piece of Horace Vernet, the portrait of Brother Philip. Opposite, is the more recent work of Charles

Muller, which reproduces the gentle countenance of the servant of God, and, between these two works of art, Krug's fine painting, "Blessed de la Salle teaching in the schools." How many Bishops in quest of Brothers for their distant dioceses have passed through that parlor of Rue Oudinot! how many holy conversations and noble ideas might not its white walls echo!

This first court is almost deserted; but the rest of the house, without being noisy, is full of life. You meet Brothers and young novices at every step. Yonder is the garden, favorable to meditation; at the end of it is a reproduction of Falguière's group. You might fancy yourself a hundred miles from Paris. The bell is ringing for Vespers and Benediction, so we will go into the chapel. The present writer has seen the Catholic services performed in the grand cathedrals of France, England, and Rome; but he was never more edified anywhere than in this chapel of Rue Oudinot. The monastic quiet of the place is enlivened by the bright and stirring element of youth contributed by the novices. It is very different from Solesmes, and yet all is strict, liturgical and most touching.

That stair-case leads to the study of the Very Honored Brother Joseph, the present Superior general, and further on to the hall of the *Régime*, or Direction. If ever you enter there, let it be with respect. It is from here that some fifteen thousand souls¹ are directed in the path traced for them by Blessed de la Salle, and it is here that, in the name of Jesus Christ, they are guided with paternal tenderness, and supported by the encouragements of experience, the most practical lessons and the wisest advice. There it is that every day and at all hours they receive tidings from every part of the globe, and converse, so to speak, with the directors of all the houses of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America.

Here the destinies of three and thirty preparatory novitiates², six and thirty novitiates³, twenty-eight scholasticates of the Institute⁴,

¹ The Institute reckoned in December 31st 1886, 11 712 Religious, 1 007 Novices, 2 120 little Novices: a total of 14 849 persons enrolled under divers titles under the flag of Blessed de la Salle.

² Boys of from thirteen to sixteen who have shown a decided inclination for the religious life, are received here, and their education is carried on while their vocation is being tried.

³ For religious training, properly so called. After further trial, the young men are clothed in the religious habit.

⁴ The young Religious receive here their finishing education, professional, and pedagogical.

and ninety-seven houses of “religious training¹,” where the very sap and future strength of the Institute is prepared, are all carefully watched over, studied and provided for.

Here everything is planned out, which is likely to be of any benefit to the fourteen hundred and ninety schools directed by the Brothers, and to the hundred and eighty boarding-schools. Here is the centre of their progress; progress in the religious and pedagogical order, progress for the soul and the body, of over three hundred thousand children².

Under the guidance of these figures, let us begin our tour through France, and let us not forget that the Institute, which is French in its origin, has developed chiefly on French soil. France alone reckons nearly nine thousand Brothers dispersed over nine hundred and seventy houses³. These statistics, like those of the Sisters of Charity, justify us in feeling a certain legitimate pride, as well as hope in the future. In presence of such a testimony, we ought not to despair.

Before leaving Paris⁴, we must visit in detail one of the schools, study its mechanism, and question the humble masters who possess such profound knowledge of child nature in general, and Parisian children in particular. We will also take note, according to the rules of M. Le Play, of those social types called a professional boarding-school, a club for the young, and an orphanage.

For all who consider dispassionately the state of public education in the two worlds, it is evident that the old world is passing through a grave crisis. For several centuries, the children of the nobility and the higher middle classes of France have received a secondary education wholly classical and literary—a great deal of Latin, some Greek, and a little French. For a long time, the sciences only came

¹ In December 31st 1886, these ninety-seven houses contained no less than 3840 subjects.

² The exact number, in December 31st 1886, was 308 387 children or lads. 6 663 classes. The *Internats* include 128 boarding-schools, properly so called, and 52 Orphanages, Protectories, and so forth. The 1 490 schools receive 284 256 day-scholars, and the 180 *Internats*, 24 131 boarders.

³ The precise number of Brothers, in France, is 8 859. The 970 houses include 1 036 schools, public and private 106 Boarding-schools (*Internats*), and 39 Orphanages, and following. The Institute has in France 22 small and 21 great novitiates, with 22 scholasticates for the religious and pedagogical training of its members; making a total of 72 establishments called “training houses.”

⁴ In Paris, 1 099 Brothers are dispersed through 96 schools and 502 classes. The figures contained in the foregoing notes all date from December 31st 1886.

in the second place, and nowhere were they as much attended to as letters. But now, all this is changed; letters are beginning to be undeservedly despised, while the first place is assigned to sciences, because, forsooth, they are more practical. The influence of America is making itself felt, and soon the time will come when we shall have nothing but engineers, whilst in its turn America shall cultivate the higher studies in literature and philosophy. Till then, we will content ourselves with tacking between the classical and the University system. The Brothers were the first to seize the true point of the situation, and their house at Passy, for the education of young men who are not destined to enter the liberal professions may be given as the type of special and technical education. The future is here, provided there be no exaggeration, and that the claims of letters be fairly balanced with those of science. Religious instruction suffices in itself to compensate whatever is too material in scientific education. The Brothers have understood this. At Saint Nicholas, the work shop stands close to the school, and this is, if I may say so, a foretaste of the future. The Christian work-shop side by side with the Christian school: all is summed up in this. Social reconciliation, the concord so much desired, the mutual love of all classes, peace, everything must grow up from this union. Enter Saint Nicholas with me. Pause a moment in the gymnastic hall, and in the carpenters' work-shop; pass further, and admire the skill with which this piece of carving is done; note the delicacy of this engraving; see how intelligently those boys use the lathe; listen to that capital band which has already hung gold medals on its victorious banner. Then, wait with us until the recreation bell rings, and see those hundreds of children, shouting at the top of their voices, climbing up those stilts and pushing the big bounding yellow ball. The fun is contagious. But it is time to leave Paris.

We have just now seen where the Brothers work; but where do they rest?

Blessed de la Salle, it may be remembered, had studied all his life this question of the rest and recreation so essential to those engaged in education. Children fatigue, they wear out their teachers,

sometimes they kill them. It is necessary to relax the soul and the body, and renew one's strength. One holiday a week, six weeks holidays after the scholastic year : this was what he considered suffi-



Athis. — Lawn and statue of the Sacred Heart. — Drawn by Sellier; engraved by Sargent.

cient for these just demands. The holidays may be spent anywhere, but it is at Athis that the Brothers find peace of soul in retreats wisely conducted and frequently renewed. At Athis, they revive their courage for fresh labors and combats, and they do not forget to pray for the soul of Brother Irlide, who procured for them this

perfect resting place. But there comes, sooner or later, a day when the springs are quite worn out, and youth can no longer be renewed.



Fleury. — House of retreat for the Brothers. — View of the gardens and the Chapel.
 Drawn by Sellier; engraved by Méaulle.

After thirty or forty years of teaching, a Brother is broken down. He has a right to rest, to peace.

On the heights of Meudon, at Fleury, there is just now being built

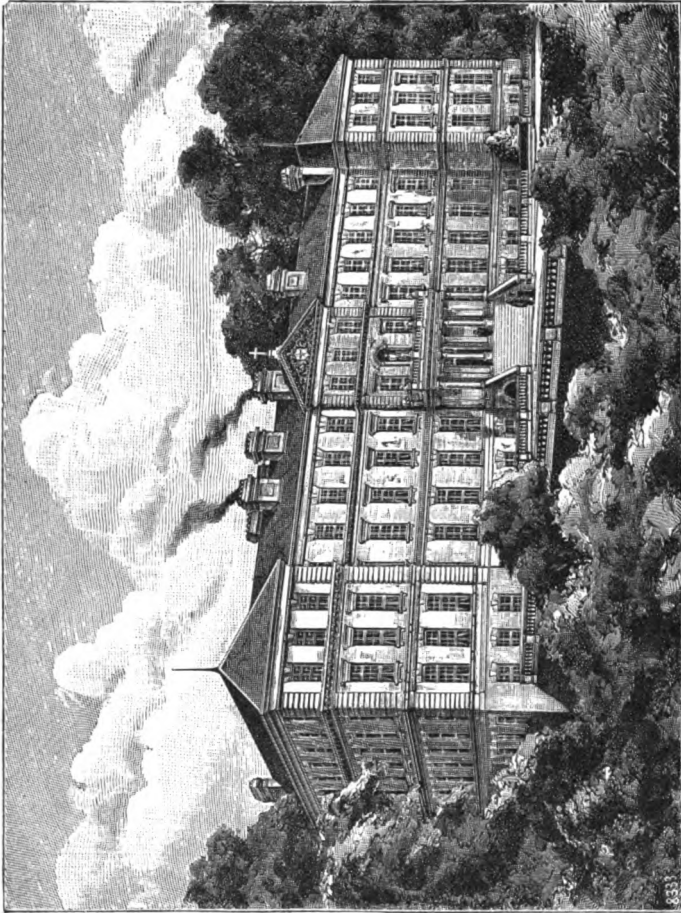
a vast and commodious abode for these invalids of Christian education. The generosity of an illustrious benefactress had this happy inspiration, and nothing will be finer than the convent awaiting there sons of Blessed de la Salle who, during their lives, have taught perhaps ten thousand poor children, and have opened ten thousand minds to the notion of God and of righteousness. This refuge of apostolic old age could not have been better placed than close to that splendid Orphanage, to which it forms a kind of annex where the merry games of the children will serve constantly to recall to the veterans of the schools the purest joys of their life.

There will be verdure there to soothe wearied eyes, and flowers that old people are so fond of, and broad avenues where the Brothers will talk about their old pupils; there will be above all a chapel where they will converse with God and His holy Mother; there will be God Himself, with all His graces, His light and His peace.

We will cast a last glance at those stately trees, and in a few hours we shall have crossed the distance which separates us from that dear city where Blessed de la Salle died, and which so faithfully honors his memory. Here we are at Rouen! Memories of the great servant of God crowd upon us, but our first pilgrimage is to Saint Yon, then to his tomb, in the chapel of the boarding-school of the Brothers, and lastly to Falguière's fine monument. Rouen was, in truth, predestined to be the city of Blessed de la Salle, for here has been raised the first chapel consecrated to him after his beatification. With what joy will not the Brothers come from every land to pray before that humble altar in the church of Blessed John Baptist de la Salle! There will assuredly be always some black robe mounting guard in this little sanctuary; the tomb will seldom be without a watcher. On we pass to other scenes.

This chapel of the Boarding-school of the Brothers, at Beauvais, is charming and serves as the centre of the Archconfraternity of Saint Joseph. This house of the Brothers in Blessed de la Salle's native city bears certain resemblance to those "new cities" of the middle ages; it is a little city in the large city of Rheims. Superb also, is the Brothers' house at Lyons, perched half way up the hill of Fourvières, and giving itself the airs of a palace; yet one breathes there the perfume of that neighboring sanctuary which is one of

the most popular of Mary's shrines. This dear land of France is so crowded with the works of Blessed de la Salle that, to give an accurate description of all, it would be necessary to go all over



General view of Saint Joseph's college, at Tooting, near London.

the country with an album, and fill it with sketches of the various notable institutions.

Spain is but a recent conquest of the Brothers; but they have

already struck root there, and the future offers a fair field to their labors in that Catholic land. The noble Spanish nation possesses resources which have lain dormant, and elements of strength which recent events have brought to light. It will soon become apparent that the Christian Brothers are the masters wanted by Spanish children, and the teachers to whom the profoundly Catholic families of Spain will confide their greatest treasure. Let us, meantime, tarry a moment¹ on the threshold of that Orphan Asylum of the Sacred Heart, where one still breathes spirit of its saintly foundress, Ernestine Manuel de Villena, and which comes very near being a master piece of harmonious and delicate architecture. It raises in all who see it a desire that the Brothers may have the opportunity of carrying to many a distant land a taste for the severe traditions of art. It is permitted to believe that this is one of their missions. As they teach drawing to their pupils in the five parts of the world, they may also teach them taste, and guard them against the frivolities and vulgarities of modern art.

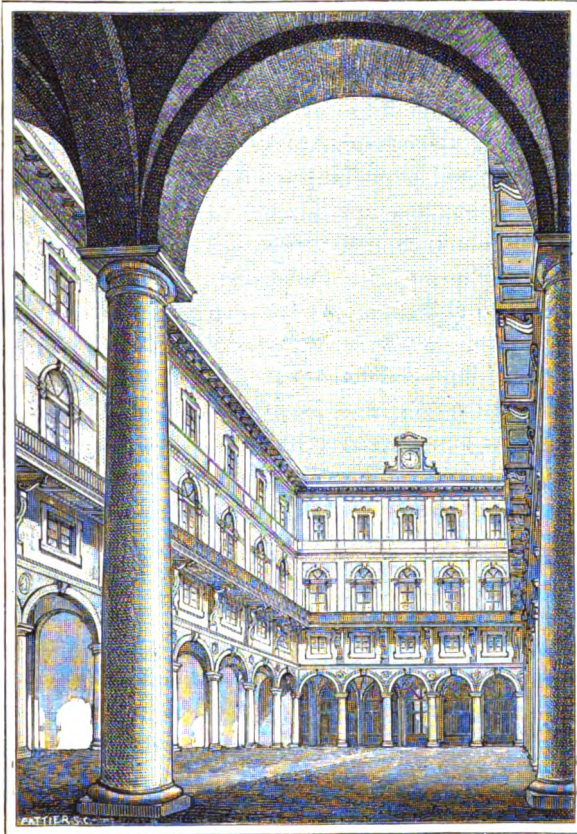
In London, we see Saint Joseph's College, at Tooting, vast and imposing, into which that of Clapham has grown. There is also the more modest establishment of Kennington Road, which has given a goodly number of zealous priests to England. It was not in vain that professional schools were founded in the last century by the first sons of Blessed de la Salle. As we have seen, they now flourish in New York as well as in Paris², and Manchester has also its industrial school.

It was at the dawn of the eighteenth century that there arose on one of the hills of Rome, close to the Trinità dei Monti, a house of the Brothers under the direction of that admirable Brother Drolin, so deservedly honored in the Institute. It must not be forgotten that, far from Blessed de la Salle, far from his Brothers, poor and without support, this friend and disciple of the holy founder

¹ Spain contains to-day 21 establishments served by 107 Brothers, who are giving a solid Christian education to over 4 000 pupils : Madrid has 5 houses; Barcelona, Las Corts, and Cadiz, 2; Bilbao, Valladolid, Anaz, Casa de la Selva, Cobrecas, Isla, Lorca, Castro-Urdiales, Teran, Arenys-do-Mar, Manlleu and Jerez de la Frontera.

² England and Ireland only occupied (in 1887) 76 Brothers, distributed over 7 establishments, and teaching 1 166 children. To those quoted above must be added the school of Saint Héliér, in the isle of Jersey, and in Ireland, the four houses of Castletown, Summer-Hill, Kildare and Waterford. We have already shown that there existed in Ireland a Congregation of Brothers formed on the model of Blessed de la Salle's Institute.

remained for more than a quarter of a century like the advance guard of the Congregation. To him is due the merit of having first brought under the notice of the Sovereign Pontiff, and caused him to accept, a specimen of Blessed de la Salle's type of the Christian



French college in Rome, near the Trinità dei Monti. — Inner court.
— Engraved by Pattier.

school. His memory will, therefore, be uppermost in our mind when we visit that French College, first established in the Poli palace, and then transferred to the vast and beautiful Piazza di Spagna¹.

¹ Italy has 24 houses served by 318 Brothers, who teach 5932 pupils; Rome, the French college, schools of the Trinità dei Monti, Saint John of Lateran, Transte-

Belgium is too near France not to feel its influence. Forty-eight houses, five hundred and sixty-four Brothers, nearly eighteen thousand pupils! A most Catholic country truly, and which still contains admirable treasures of faith. In order to form a genuine idea of the expansion of the Institute of Blessed de la Salle, we had better halt a while at Malonne¹. The old pupils of the Brothers assemble there every year for an annual retreat under the direction of their old masters. Malonne, moreover, is the oldest normal school in the kingdom. Then we will recreate ourselves by spending a few days at Carlsbourg, in that fine Agronomical Institute which has anticipated every improvement, and where agricultural hydraulics and zootechny are taught. There are immense kitchen and botanical gardens, copses, ponds, a hive, all of which serve for the education of the pupils. Carlsbourg is a school of Grignon², progressive and Christian, where the Brothers lead the way back to the woods and fields, a way which our age has almost forgotten.

In Switzerland, the scene changes : Catholics are not free here as in Belgium. The odious and stupid persecution going on in that country could not fail to reach the Brothers and their schools. On the 8th of February 1872, the grand Council voted the iniquitous law against religious congregations, and, on the following 11th of August, the Brothers in Geneva were compelled to take leave of their pupils. Bishop Mermillod was there, and addressed these eloquent and avenging words to the persecutors : “ Fear nothing from the Catholics; they forgive. When they are in the majority, they will return you good for evil; they will repair your faults, and bring back to Geneva liberty and honor that you would fain drive away from it³. ”

vere, Saint Saviour, Santà Maria dei Monti, and that Saint Joseph of Artigianelli, which is the Saint Nicholas of Rome. Outside Rome, there are houses in Albano, Benevento, Bolseno, Castel-Gondolfo, Guarcino, Nettuno and Porto d'Anzio; in Upper Italy, Turin (2), Genoa, Parma, Piacenza, Susa, Biella (2), Grugliasco and Vercelli.

¹ The other Communities of the Brothers are at Courtrai, Ghent, Alost, Basel, Boom, Saint Trond, Bruxelles, Nivelles, Louvain, Schaerbeck, Tournai, Lessines, Enghien, Ath, Soignies, Gosselies, Charleroy, Chatelet, Binche, Mons, Ghlin, Jemmapes, Frameries, Pâturages, Dour, Peruwelz, Tamines, Gembloux, Namur, Florennes, Chaumont, Dinant, Ciney, Rochefort, Liège, Tilleur, Verviers, Herve, Henri-Chapelle, Aubel, Laroche, Bertrix.

² Grignon is the great National Agricultural school of France. It was established in 1826, by M. Bella. In 1848, it became a National Agricultural school.

³ In Switzerland, the Brothers serve the two houses of Neuchâtel and Attalens : 7 Brothers and 230 pupils.

In Germany, persecution reigned likewise. There is at the present moment only one Christian school in the whole Empire; that is at Metz. This fact speaks for itself; it is needless to enlarge upon it. Amongst the suppressed houses we must mention Kemperhof, an orphanage entrusted to the sons of Blessed de la Salle. The Empress Augusta loved this house and took pleasure in visiting it. More than once she assisted at the examinations, and distributed the prizes to the pupils. But the May laws have put an end to all that; the Kemperhof orphanage disappeared with so many other Catholic Institutions, and the Empress Augusta, amidst her many overwhelming griefs, has ceased, probably, to think of the orphans and their masters.

We breathe again in Austria, and salute the fine Imperial orphanage of Vienna which the Emperor Francis Joseph visited last year, and did not hesitate to admire aloud. "I find," he said, "a manly bearing in all these children, and their answers have a remarkable degree of precision. Nothing proves the merit of their masters more than this¹."

Before taking leave of Europe, let us pass by Constantinople, where the Brothers have four houses². They may be counted amongst the most useful servants of France and of the Church in the East, and amongst those who contribute to uphold our influence there. Such also is their mission at Erzeroum, Smyrna, Kadi-Keui, Jaffa, Trebizond, Caiffa, Tripoli, and in that dear city of Jerusalem which the noblest part of humanity will always call—"the holy City." Like the Franciscans, these sons of Blessed de la Salle mount guard over the holy places. In their primary school, they teach the children of Jerusalem, and, in their normal school, they prepare the natives to become Catholic teachers themselves. This new sphere of activity is amongst the most valuable they have inaugurated.

On leaving the Holy Land, we must not fail to pass through Egypt³, and we will disembark at Alexandria, where the Brothers

¹ 102 Brothers, distributed through 5 houses, represent the Institute in Austria and Germany. In Austria: Vienna, Pressbaum, Fünffaus, Strebersdorf. — In Bulgaria, we can only name the house at Sophia, for which the Prince of Batterberg had a particular affection.

² In Turkey in Europe, Greece and Roumania, there are 5 houses, 23 Brothers, 707 pupils. In Turkey in Asia, 9 houses, 96 Brothers, 2 303 pupils.

³ 5 houses, 120 Brothers, 1 715 pupils.

have the honor of directing that college of Saint Catherine, which received from the French government the privilege of conferring diplomas almost tantamount to those of the University. It is not, however, either at Alexandria or Cairo that we will tarry longest, but at Ramleh, where we find both a novitiate and a boarding-school. This novitiate is an advance post of Christianity in the land of Islamism, and is, therefore, especially dear to us. But we cannot bid farewell to Egypt without having seen the Suez canal, and we can rest at Port-Saïd, in that unpretending Christian school which the canal Company will, we have no doubt, enlarge and encourage. This school is a light held up in a land traversed in every direction by dangerous influences, by Protestantism and modern materialism.

At Tunis, at La Goulette¹, the Brothers have a school, and there, as elsewhere, they honor France and cause her to be loved. If from Tunis we pass on to the most important of her colonies, we find them numerous and flourishing, at Algiers and especially at El-Biar, where they have a novitiate and a boarding-school, likely to render great services in the future².

In almost all the countries we have passed through, the Brothers of the Christian schools are fighting against Islamism, which is one of the most formidable agencies of error and of evil. But in India they have a far more terrible enemy to combat, this is Buddhism. The much vaunted traits of so called resemblance between this creed and Christianity have been shown up in their true light; they are very easily explained away. Buddhism is the more hostile to the Catholic apostleship, because of this pretended likeness to the true Church. The battle is a hard one, and the Brothers are in the advance guard. The house at Rangoon, in Burmah, is well worth the trouble of a visit, and Christian travellers would do well to make a short stay there for the purpose. Artists would seize many a rapid sketch of those Burmese types that deserve to be better known. It is Burmah christianized, and, let us say it boldly, civilized³.

¹ In Algiers, 9 houses, 92 Brothers, 1559 pupils. In Tunis, 2 houses, 18 Brothers, 689 pupils.

² In Algiers, the Brothers are also settled at Blida, Oran, Tlemcen, Sidi-Bel-Abbès, Constantine, and Philippeville.

³ In India and China, the Institute possesses 9 establishments, that are served by 76 Brothers and count 2477 pupils: Rangoon, Mouhucin, Poulo-Pinang, Singapore.

The Brothers have so far barely alighted on the vast Chinese Empire; but this is to be their conquest in the future, a future not far off, we believe. China cannot long continue to be exclusive; thousands of unknown martyrs who died there for Jesus Christ are



English possessions in India : Burmah. — Rangoon. — Boarding-school of the Brothers.
— Drawn by Seller.

praying for the coming of His kingdom amongst her people. Their prayers will avail far more than a disciplined army, and the Brothers will be found among the standard-bearers of that new kingdom. But our survey is not yet ended. Madagascar is in our day a sort of little world where the Brothers were not afraid of encamping. They have houses at Tamatave, Tananarive, and Fianarantsoa. The

in the English Indies; — Colombo (2) and Negombo, in the island of Ceylon; — Hong-Kong in China. At Hong-Kong there is a college and an orphanage.

natives of Madagascar present many new and strange types. We find the Brothers again at Saint Denis, in the island of the Reunion¹, and at Curepipe in the Mauritius².

We have travelled all over the old continent; let us now turn our steps to the new one.

It is, no doubt, permitted to challenge the bold and somewhat rash views of a young writer of our day who, in an article which made a great sensation, pointed to America as the country whose soil was most favorable to the future development of the Catholic Church. We cannot believe that God has condemned to sterility and impotence the entire old world, and particularly France. It is certain, nevertheless, that Catholicity is expanding in America with incomparable fertility. I saw only the other day a beautiful book containing the portraits of our Bishops across the Atlantic. They all have broad foreheads, eyes sparkling with intelligence, and a dignity tempered with kindness. Learned men and Saints, and, withal, wearing an air of youth like men who look to the future with the trust of conquerors. All our Catholic institutions over there resemble transplanted trees that are striking healthy roots in a soil providentially prepared to receive them. Everything succeeds, everything prospers, everything lives. Innumerable churches, convents and schools are transforming the face of the land. It is a consoling and touching spectacle, and, as Catholics, we heartily congratulate our generous American fellow-Catholics.

Amongst a people so fond of science and so respectful towards faith, the Institute³ of the Brothers of the Christian schools was sure to meet with cordial and kindly welcome; but where could they be better received than in that dear Canada, which has preserved, so to speak, the French stamp? The Congregation of Blessed de la Salle developed more rapidly here than in any other part of America⁴. At Montreal, there are no less than a hundred and twenty Brothers divided amongst eight establishments, and in Quebec we reckon fifty-five Brothers in four houses⁵. These statistics augur well for the future.

¹ There are also Brothers at Sainte Marie, Saint André, Saint Philip, Saint Joseph, Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Salazie and Entre-Deux.

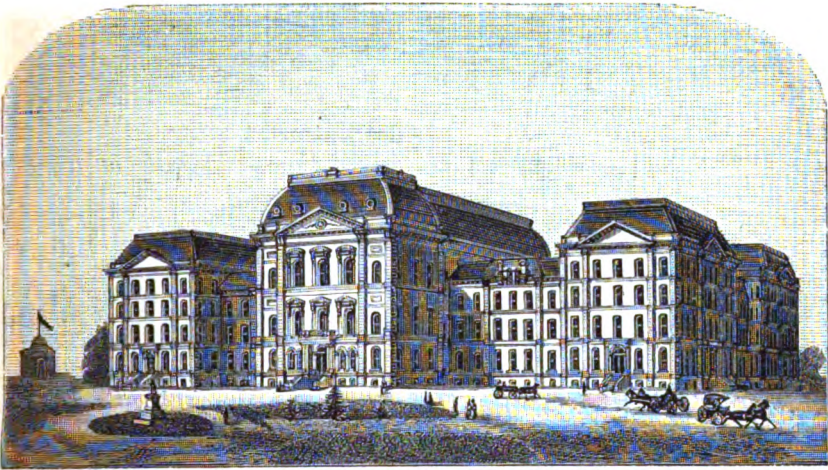
² In these three islands, 401 Brothers and 13 establishments.

³ The Institute has in America 148 establishments served by 1151 Brothers.

⁴ Canada has 33 houses and 299 Brothers.

⁵ The other establishments in Canada are: Ottawa (3, and 25 Brothers), Trois-

It is not, indeed, surprising that such an Institution should have prospered so well on the Catholic soil of Canada; but in the United States the Conditions were not the same; the soil here was, in fact, antagonistic to its growth. The United States are, as we know, the very hotbed of religious sects, which may be reckoned there by hundreds. There are dangerous sects, and ridiculous ones, and Protestantism, some fifty years ago, might have passed for the dominant religion of this divided population. But how changed are



Mount Saint Louis Institute, Montreal, Canada.

the times! Catholicism, like a beautiful flower, is opening in the sunshine, and spreading apace. In the entire district of Saint Louis ¹, we still find a population of French origin, and we are not surprised to see one hundred and seventy five Brothers at work there, distributed over fifteen houses. But what shall we say of the district of New York ² with its thirty establishments and its three

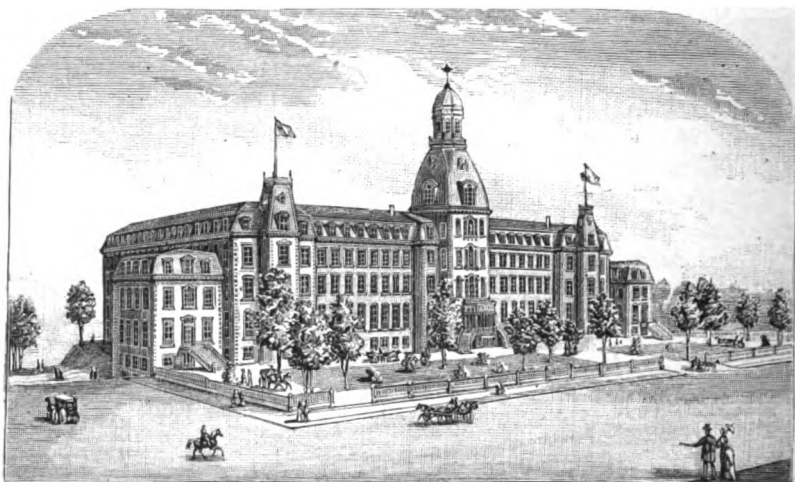
Rivières, the Baie-du-Febvre, Nicolet, Saint Grégoire, Hull, l'Islet, Halifax, Saint Jean-Dorchester, Longueuil, Saint Mary, Yamachiche, Lachine, Kingston, Toronto (2), Saint Catherine, Fraserville, Hochelaga.

¹ District of Saint Louis: Saint Louis (4), Chicago (2), Saint Joseph (2), Feehanville, Glencoe, Memphis, New-Orleans, Saint Paul, Bernanillo, Santa-Fe.

² District of New York: New York (8), Albany (2), Troy (2), Utica (2), Westchester (2), Amawalk, Brooklyn, Buffalo, Chicopee, Detroit, Manchester, Manhattanville, Melrose, Newburgh, Peekskill, Providence, Syracuse, Yonkers; Halifax, in Canada.

hundred and forty-two Brothers, and of Baltimore with its hundred and fifty-five Religious and nineteen schools? Yet all these swarms have come from the lowly hive of Blessed de la Salle.

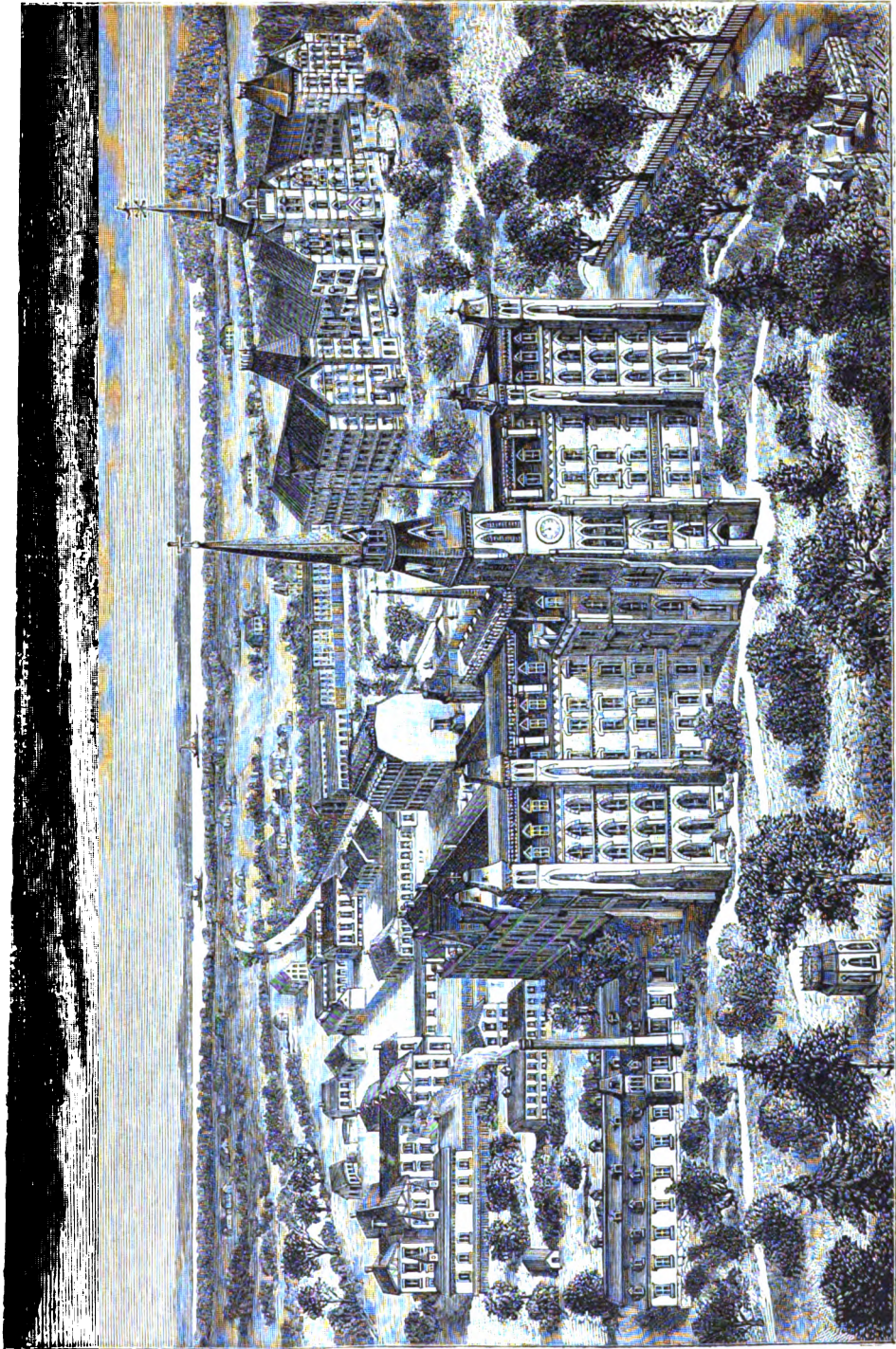
Catholic institutions have everywhere the same essential characteristics; but their external features may, and do vary according to climate and country. A school in New York will not be the same as a school in Paris, and the little American boy of seven will not be the same type as the little Parisian of the same age.



College of the Christian Brothers, Saint Louis, Mo. United States.

We must be prepared for these differences, and study the Protectory of New York or Manhattan college, as we do Saint Nicholas or Passy.

The Protectory would require a study all to itself, and nothing is more touching than the history of its rise and early years. We have under our eyes a record where the story is told with the simplicity of Catholic eloquence, and we cannot do better than quote from it. "Before 1862, Catholics were seriously considering in New York the problem of how to react against the proselytism of Protestant societies, which were every day carrying off troops of poor destitute Catholic children, and educating them as Protestants. The better to ensure the success of their work, these sectarians changed the names of the children, and sent them away after a



New York. — *The Catholic Procectory*, directed by the Brothers of the Christian schools.

while to the Far West. This lamentable state of things was a source of constant and deep anxiety to Brother Patrick, then President of Manhattan College, now Assistant to the Superior general, and of the illustrious Doctor Silliman Ives, once a Protestant Bishop, and afterwards a faithful and valiant son of the Roman Church. On the occasion of administering Confirmation in the parish-church of Manhattanville, several of the leading Catholic citizens of New York were invited to meet Archbishop Hughes at the pastoral residence. ”

The question was there discussed at length. The moment Brother Patrick promised to give Brothers to manage the projected institution, His Grace exclaimed : “ In God’s name, gentlemen, let us begin the work ! ” Forthwith all those present subscribed for relatively large sums, and the Catholic Protectory sprang into existence. Its beginnings were humble, but God’s blessing was upon them. The institution grew rapidly, and, at the present day, contains two thousand children.

As soon as these waifs and strays are received into the house, the first care of the Brothers is to prepare them for their first Communion. They are taught all that is necessary to make them honest tradesmen or clever mechanics. Twenty different trades are taught in the establishment, and the children choose whichever they are best suited for by taste and natural aptitude. There is a tailoring work-shop, one for carpenters, a shoe-making shop, and above all a printing office which occupies a great number of young workers, and does very creditable work.

“ The city of New York pays for the children belonging to it. From time to time, the State has made appropriations for the purpose of keeping up the house and defraying such improvements and repairs as are found to be necessary. Places are procured for the most competent of the young workmen when they have reached a certain age. A large majority of these youths have turned out well, and are now useful citizens of the Republic. The good thus done increases every day, and is incalculable. Already has the Protectory snatched from misery and physical and moral ruin tens of thousands of souls. ” This Protectory naturally leads us to record the fact that, from the moment of the introduction of the Brothers into his diocese, Archbishop Hughes was their fast friend and protector. But, besides the Protectory, we should mention



Dr Hughes, Archbishop of New York. — Engraved by Méaulle.

other institutions of a different character, but no less prosperous. We should, above all, mention the Brothers' Boarding-schools. Those of Saint Louis, San Francisco, Baltimore, and Memphis merit special notice. We should not forget, in order to see things



Brother Facile, Assistant for America. — Engraved by Meulle.

in their true light, that boarding-schools in these countries have a particular aim and object, and consequently a particular organization. What the new world wants, above all, is a native clergy, both numerous and devoted. The Brothers in their colleges are preparing this element, so necessary in the life of a Catholic country. Let us take, for instance, Manhattan college— in the space of twenty-

three years, it has given over one hundred and forty priests to the Church.

We have just mentioned Baltimore; it is the chief town of a district that possesses nineteen houses and occupies one hundred and fifty-five Brothers¹. In Philadelphia, fifty-one Brothers are laboring in seven establishments whose aim is the salvation of souls. The district of San Francisco is less favored, having only eighty-six Religious and nine foundations; but it is a comparatively new district and has a bright future, and the sons of Blessed de la Salle will in this land of golden promise, great energy and generous hearts, find a vast and a fair field, for their noble task, which is protected from above by St Francis².

All honor then to youthful America, who so nobly welcomed the Brothers of the Christian schools, and who, full of trust in the future, is perhaps destined to preserve to the Catholic Church her independence, her supremacy and her glory!

In South America³, which is all Catholic, the Clergy long sufficed for the education of the people, and the Brothers seemed to be less needed there. The generous Spanish blood flows in the veins of these proud colons, long since independent. They want a few men like that noble Garcia Moreno, who, deeply penetrated with the beauty of Catholic dogma, aimed at creating a truly Christian republic, uncompromising, pure and beautiful, *sine ruga et macula*. We know what a tragical end awaited this grand Christian. Success, however, is not happily the only thing which inspires the admiration of mankind, and the name of Garcia Moreno will always remain dear to noble souls and Catholic hearts, and the Brothers, whose friend he was, will never forget him.

Our tour round the world is finished; but our readers may, like ourselves, feel the need of a rapid and clear recapitulation. We will present it to them in the philosophical order.

How do these 14,849 Brothers or novices who compose the Insti-

¹ District of Baltimore: Baltimore, Ammendale, Ellicott-City, in Maryland; Jersey City, Hoboken, Newark, Paterson, in the State of New Jersey; Washington, Norfolk, Philadelphia.

² San-Francisco (3), Oakland (2), Temescal, Martinez, Sacramento, in California; Portland, in Oregon.

³ There are 94 Brothers in 12 houses. — At Equador, there are 75 Brothers and 9 establishments. (Quito, 28 Brothers and 2 houses; Guayaquil, Guano, Guaranda, Latacunga, Loja, Riobamba, Ambato.) In Chili, 19 Brothers and 3 establishments (2 at Santiago and 1 at Valparaiso).



Garcia Moreno, late President of the Republic of Ecuador. — Engraved by Meunier.

tute at the present time, employ their day? Have they all one and the same function, and do they, as their name would lead us to infer, occupy themselves solely with Christian schools? We have seen enough of them to be convinced of the contrary.

The primary schools are undoubtedly still the chief mission of the Brothers, and they are likely to remain so; for the sons of Blessed de la Salle are masters in that specialty, and are moreover too proud of their mission to the poor and the lowly to change it for any other; but, while keeping faithfully to the models and lessons of their holy founder, they have been able to adapt to the present age the scholastic type that he created. They have excellent school-books. They keep up with all the modern discoveries and all the new methods. What will never change in their schools is the general method, that simultaneous system of teaching which is being made constantly more complete; what will change still less is the Christian spirit which pervades the whole Institute, and animates every part of its organisation. The Brothers do not profess the great modern heresy: they do not sacrifice education to instruction. To form Christians, to form men, such is their great aim.

It is a curious name enough, when one comes to analyze it, that of Superior primary schools; but the name exists, and we may let it stand. It undoubtedly answers to a need and a reality. There is a large section of persons who could not afford the luxury of having their children taught Greek and Latin. Whilst illustrious religious orders are devoting themselves to the education of the governing classes, the Brothers devote themselves to that of the governed classes. Their commercial education is acknowledged to be first-rate, and their Superior schools of Saint Roch, Saint Clotilde and the Avenue Saint Ouen (in Paris) are proofs of this. And yet this is only a beginning, and before twenty years these foundations will need to be multiplied tenfold. But there is no professional education worthy of the name if practice does not complete theory in it. In a word, the school is not sufficient; it needs to be supplemented by the work-shop. The disciples of Blessed de la Salle understood this, and they inaugurated the creation of types entirely modern. At Lyons, the De la Salle school includes a fine scientific laboratory, with work-shops for adjusting, forging, weaving, joining and modelling. Saint Nicholas, in Paris, and another professional school

at Saint Étienne, are equally well organized, and from these the pupils are taken in sections to a great central manufactory where useful trades of the most opposite kinds are carried on. In Rome there is the *Artigianelli*, an Italian Saint Nicholas; there is the *Industrial School* in Manchester, and in New York the *Protectory*.

We hear loud complaints of the alarming encroachments of trade, and the way the rural districts are being deserted by the laborers. The Brothers, largely recruited themselves from the people, could not overlook in their wide-reaching instruction that art of agriculture which is the life of the people. The time seems come when there are to be no more peasants; they have lost the love of labor, the noble labor of the soil; they despise the plough, and farmers now bring up their sons to be teachers and tradesmen. The Institute of Blessed de la Salle has protested forcibly against this evil by creating a number of agricultural orphanages, the Agricultural Schools of Igny and of Vaujours, the famous agricultural Institute of Beauvais and the Agronomical Institute of Carlsbourg in Belgium. A similar school is being started near Philadelphia. Let us hope that they will work on successfully in the same direction, and that the Brothers will end by bringing back the country people to the love of the country.

The boarding-schools are the subject of violent controversies in these days, but it is pretty generally admitted that, at least for a certain class of children and lads, they are absolutely necessary. Blessed de la Salle was of this opinion, and opened a boarding-school whose chief object was the training of masters for the villages. In 1688, he opened a second for the same purpose in the parish of Saint Hippolyte, and a few years later a third for the young Irish boys that James II. had confided to him. But this is not all. Blessed de la Salle founded the celebrated boarding-school of Saint Yon, which was the model of so many others, and where the pupils were instructed in all that belongs to trade, finance, the army, architecture and mathematics. The successors of the great servant of God have walked in the way he marked out for them, and have developed the work he so well began. In 1790, the Brothers were directing fifteen boarding-schools. In these days, when more than ever it has become necessary to make "secondary special" education superior to all others, the Brothers have been compelled to enlarge their first programme. We may go farther, and say that

this secondary special education is really their discovery, and that their house at Passy was the first model of it in our age. Their adversaries are obliged to render them this justice, and I have never met one of them who did not speak of Passy with admiration. Here young men are prepared for that Central school into which it is so hard to gain admittance, whose programme is so severe and whose spirit is so material. If, as we are persuaded, they send Christians into it, they are rendering a great service to their age, which stands so much in need of a faith and an ideal. Pope Leo XIII. earnestly recommends to all Catholics the union of science and faith : the Brothers anticipated this counsel.

To form schools is all very well ; but it is necessary also to form the future masters of a young generation threatened with so many perils. This is what is being actively carried out in the novitiates of the Congregation, every day and all day long ; and here we ought, perhaps, were not our space measured, to speak at some length of that admirable work which merits above all others to bear the name of the holy founder. This " work of the Venerable," which is now the work of " the Blessed," has no other aim than the creation and support of these preparatory novitiates where lads of thirteen or fourteen are prepared for the Brotherhood by three years' study and pious training. These dear preparatory novitiates, of which there are thirty-two at the present time, only sheltered 933 little novices in 1882, but God blessed them visibly, and in 1887 these neophytes numbered 2,129. It is the nursery of the Institute.

This forming of subjects for their order could not satisfy the Christian ambition of the Brothers, who formerly directed in France several Normal schools of the State, and who still direct several similar establishments in Belgium. Every year, their old pupils who have become masters assemble at Carlsbourg or Malonne to make a retreat, and see their former masters whom they love. They come away better and happier.

When the Viscount de Melun, in 1843, first conceived the plan of his Young Men's Associations, it was the Brothers he asked to manage that little world of apprentices and young workmen whose souls he wanted to save. It is therefore to the Brothers that we owe the model of these Patronages which are the necessary supplement of the Christian schools. No undertaking seemed more

difficult to accomplish, and none ever succeeded better. The Parisian apprentice is apt to be noisy, insolent, undisciplined; the Brothers have tamed and humanized him. And what they begin in their patronages, they continue in those Societies of perseverance which M. de Melun founded “against ignorance, vice and loneliness.” In all these various foundations we find that spirit of piety, which the Brothers have the gift of communicating, as well as that loyalty and cheerfulness of pious souls, which are characteristic of all their works.

Would that we were free to speak as we should wish of those clubs for young men where we find, with this same spirit, the same modest and imposing virtues. The club of the Francs-Bourgeois is known everywhere, and was long the object of the active care of the present Superior.

Such are the principal functions which the Institute is carrying on at the present day. Nor are these the only ones. The Brothers are to be seen conducting the choirs of the great parishes in Paris, providing acolytes for them, and drilling those troops of turbulent and giddy children. In Rome the prefect of the singing-school of San Salvatore in Laura is a Brother. At Ghent, they have their Artistic Club, and in Paris their excellent Family House, founded in 1854 in the old Rue des Francs-Bourgeois at the Marais, and which, for the last twenty years, occupies one of the finest mansions of the Rue Saint Antoine. At Besançon and Saint Étienne the Brothers have Deaf-and-Dumb schools, and while some of them are teaching the little choir-boys to sing, others strive to compensate the poor afflicted ones by giving them a language of their own, drawing out their intelligence and cultivating their souls.

The works of the Brothers are innumerable, and they do not despair of creating others. Their hope surpasses even their activity.

We have several times had occasion to say that what the sons of Blessed de la Salle aimed at above all was to train up Christians. In order to compass this chief object of their Institute, and preserve the fruits of Christian education, they have recourse to all the resources of Catholic works.

In their schools, they encourage the associations of the Propagation of the Faith, of the Holy Childhood and Peter's Pence. They multiply Societies of the Blessed Virgin; they spread the Apostolate of prayer.

They have Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul in their boarding-schools, and, for souls more advanced in holiness, Associations for the Monthly Communion of reparation.

They have Societies of perseverance for the young, Clubs and Family Houses where Christian life is well organized. They are occupied with workmen and soldiers, and the Society of Saint Francis Xavier reckons them amongst its best auxiliaries. In this way they send the rich Christian sap flowing through branches of the Church, which yesterday seemed withered and dead; thus it is that the dry branches blossom forth, and bear flowers and fruit.

Thus, in one word, do they bring Jesus Christ to live in souls, and prepare the social reign of victorious Truth.





Blessed de la Salle in glory.

CHAPTER VII.

BEATIFICATION OF BLESSED JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE.

A MINUTE examination of the extraordinary virtues of Blessed de la Salle occupied the Holy See during long years; but various causes suspended the process of beatification in which the Institute was so deeply interested.

In 1835, one hundred and sixteen years after his death, the process began simultaneously at Rheims, where M. de la Salle conceived the first idea of his work; in Paris, where he consolidated it by suffering, and at Rouen, where he left it definitely founded.

How different is the way of the Church from that of the world towards those whom she wishes to honor! The world awards her great ones, while living, a few hurried honors which it makes haste to forget the moment their recipients are dead. During the brief moments of regret that follow their departure, it flings a few garlands on their grave; and then it goes on its way. It must make haste. Not being itself sure of the morrow, it cannot afford to delay such rewards as it wishes to bestow.

The Church acts differently. While a man lives, she suspends her judgment. He may belie the virtues of his past life, and die a sinner after having lived a Saint. She waits until death has finally consecrated his merits and manifested his perseverance.

She waits still further. She waits till every rumor has died away and until passions are cooled down; until the contemporaries of the man she judges are dead, and can no longer disturb by their interests or their vanities the peace in which she wishes to judge him; until time, which sets all things in their place and in their true proportions, has done its work. And if, after the lapse of a century, there remains a grand and venerated memory guarded by the respect of mankind, a sanctity which God Himself has proved and attested by miracles, then the process of canonization may begin.

The decree of introduction of the cause of the servant of God, the deed conferring on him the title of Venerable, was signed by Gregory XVI. It is dated the 8th of May 1840.

These proceedings are justly styled a "process." They lack neither the opposition, nor the formalities, nor any of those circumstances which enter into the most minute and complicated criminal law-suit. All the actions of him who is about to be placed on the altar are scrupulously searched into, all his writings are passed through the most rigorous ordeal of censorship, in order to make sure that they do not contain any error against faith. The doctrine must be perfectly pure, the life without spot; for the Church holds up to the veneration of men none but irreproachable standards.

All these requirements were filled by Blessed de la Salle.

On the 12th of September 1840 was promulgated the decree declaring that no worship had been paid to him; for the Church does not allow her judgments to be anticipated, and the inconsiderate honors which the faithful might think fit to render to the dead would be an obstacle to those she reserves for them.

On the 22nd of April 1842, another decree proclaimed "the renown of sanctity" in M. de la Salle's life. And on the 6th of September 1846, the proceedings of Rheims, Paris and Rouen were canonically approved.

Then came the examination of the writings attributed to the servant of God.

The three Archbishops of Paris, Rheims, and Rouen, were charged to search out these writings and send them to Rome to be submitted to the examination of theologians. This enquiry was a lengthened one. A sufficiently large number of writings were, indeed, attrib-

uted to M. de la Salle, and they might have really been his work; but his manuscripts were lost. The Servant of God could not be held responsible for the interpretations, sometimes ill-intentioned, which the Jansenists might have slipped into the various editions of his works. This doubt was solved in favor of the cause by a decree of the Congregation of Rites, rendered on the 10th of January 1852, and which, on the 18th of the same month, was confirmed by the Sovereign Pontiff.

The process of beatification was, according to traditional custom, continued by an enquiry into the virtues of Venerable de la Salle and their heroic character.

On the 10th of July 1873, the Congregation of Rites, assembled in a public sitting under the presidency of the Pope, decided that the “theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity towards God and towards his neighbor, the Cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance, and the ‘annexed virtues’, had been practised by the servant of God, John Baptist de la Salle, in the heroic degree.”

It was only on the Feast of All Souls of this same year 1873 that this decree, so long expected, was at last promulgated.

At noon, Pius IX. entered the throne room, where a hundred Brothers were grouped round their Superior general, who was beaming with happiness. The Sovereign Pontiff seated himself upon his throne, having at his right Cardinal Patrizi, Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, and Cardinal Pitra, reporter of the process of Beatification. We know how solemn are these festivities, and we have not forgotten what the majesty of Pius IX. was; we remember also the calm and pious countenance of Brother Philip: so it is easy to picture to ourselves the whole scene. But how the hearts of the Brothers must have leaped when M^r Bartolini, secretary of the Congregation of Rites, gave utterance to this solemn declaration:— “It is proved that the theological virtues— Faith, Hope, and Charity towards God and man, as well as the Cardinal virtues— Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance,— were practised in the heroic degree by the venerable servant of God, John Baptist de la Salle, so that henceforth we may proceed to the examination of the miracles.”

This great question of the examination of the miracles remained, effectively, to be dealt with.

Now the Church has always shown herself very minutious and hard to satisfy in the matter of miracles. She insists on their being



Cardinal Pitra, Postulator of the cause of Blessed de la Salle and Protector of the Institute.
— Engraved by Farlet.

evident and scientifically proved. She rejects all obscure or doubtful cases. Light, and still more light! this is what she cries unceasingly.

On the 13th of February 1883, the Congregation of Rites, assembled anew, recognized the validity of the processes which had been conducted simultaneously in Paris, Orleans, and Rouen, concerning the miracles of Venerable de la Salle. This judgment was, on the very next day, approved by Leo XIII., happily reigning.

Since then, these miracles have never ceased to be studied in Rome. The Promoter of the faith presented his objections in a printed memorial which he handed to the advocate of the cause. The advocate of the cause answered in another memorial. The Consultors of the Congregation of Rites then devoted forty days to the study of the alleged and contested facts. Then followed a fresh memorial from the Promoter, and a fresh answer from the advocate.

It was only now that a "Preparatory Congregation" was convoked to discuss certain facts; but all ended happily, and the last Congregation in which the final vote is given, and whence the Pope carries away the secret of his final decision, was held. All depends, indeed, on his Yes or No.

The whole Catholic universe read with respect and enthusiasm this decree on the miracles of Blessed de la Salle. It is dated the 1st of November 1887, and begins by an admirable eulogy of the servant of God.

Then the three miracles, definitely asserted and acknowledged, are related successively. We shall give them here.

The first dates from that cruel year 1832 which was to make so many victims. A young girl of twenty, Victoire Ferry, who was employed in the general Hospital of Orleans, was the victim of a frightful accident. A mad woman fell upon her, threw her down, and tore her body with blows and kicks. They thought she would have died on the spot. She survived, however, but only to be threatened with death every day. Her sufferings were heart-rending to witness; she was burned with fever, and had fearful vomitings of blood; her whole body was swollen; her blood seemed to be decomposed. She sometimes remained three or four hours in her mother's arms like one dead. Horrible to say, she was bled no less than two hundred and sixteen times. This living death lasted twelve years; but, in 1844, all seemed to be at an end. Then it was that some one told her about Venerable de la Salle, and she felt a sudden confidence

in him as a powerful intercessor. She read the life of the servant of God, and her confidence increased. Seeing an account of one of the miracles he had performed, she was suddenly seized with a kind of extraordinary internal commotion. She then heard the voice of the Venerable founder who appeared to her in the night, and said : "Thou art cured!" And cured she was, this sufferer who, just now unable to walk, rushed out to the church, and ascended the steps without any effort! The people surrounded her, they congratulated her, they wept for joy, and Rome was informed of the prodigy, which is one of those that the Promoter of the faith was forced to acknowledge as clearly authentic.

In 1866, Brother Adelminien was directing in Paris the Community of Saint Nicholas-des-Champs. He was an active and devoted master, given up wholly to his duties, and had reason to look forward to long years of health. Suddenly he was stricken by a thunderbolt. This thunderbolt was a disease of which the illustrious Doctor Trousseau said :— "There is no cure for it." It was what is known in medicine as progressive locomotor ataxy. A horrible name, but a more horrible reality. It means a fatal rupture of the whole human equilibrium. The limbs of the sufferer are left to themselves, and cannot guide themselves; it is physical anarchy. We have seen sufferers afflicted with this malady, and there is not a more lamentable spectacle. The Brother felt that he had no one to turn to but God and His Saints. He started off heroically from Paris, and dragged himself to the tomb of Blessed de la Salle at Rouen. On the 5th of January 1868, after a first novena which brought no result, the poor stricken man, in no way discouraged, began another. Suddenly he felt atrociously sharp pains such as he had never known before. He might have thought it was death; but, instead of that, it was his cure; a complete, instantaneous and lasting cure. "There is no cure for it," Doctor Trousseau had said. Venerable de la Salle, thanks be to God, had miraculously reversed the sentence of the great medical man.

The third miracle will seem more touching, for the very natural reason that it was performed on a child. This poor child, named Stephen de Suzanne, though only eleven years old, was in reality older than many an old man. His rickety emaciation was painful to witness; the doctors counted one hundred pulsations in his feeble

pulse, “and his body was so gathered up that the chin touched the knees.” The family gave up all hope of saving this poor little emaciated creature, who had a cough that was strangling. Fortunately, the parents were true Christians, who thought of the child’s soul. They were anxious about his First Communion. The child declared with his consumptive voice that he “wanted to make it.” And he did make it, but as one on his death bed. They brought him his God, and he received Him with fervent piety, saying that he would finish his thanksgiving in heaven. His parents believed that he would, and poured out their anguish to Cardinal de Bonnechose. “In your place,” said the prelate, “I would ask Venerable de la Salle to cure the child. He has just saved Brother Adelinien, and perhaps he will save your Stephen.” The grandmother, who was there, and who tenderly loved her grandchild, at once seized on this hope. They began a novena immediately. On the third day the child said :— “I think I am going to be cured.” But, as it often happens to those about to be miraculously cured, he suffered more and more. Nevertheless, he persisted in hoping, and repeated :— “I shall be cured at the end of the novena.” Then, turning to his mother :— “Get ready my clothes,” he said, “I want to go to mass.” And he did go, the day after the novena, fresh, active, gay, cured in fact. Never was there a more instantaneous miracle, nor one received with more joy.

Such are the miracles of which, after long and patient examination, the Church guarantees the authenticity.

After this declaration, the Church had exhausted all her precautions, all her solemn preparations. There now remained to her nothing but to send forth from the dome of Saint Peter’s the great cry which reverberates all over the universe :— “Blessed de la Salle, pray for us !”

These festivities of the Beatification are splendid, and we can form some idea of them from the account of what took place in Rome, on Sunday, February 19th 1888¹.

It is above the portico of Saint Peter’s, “in the great hall of canonization,” that the solemn rite is about to be accomplished, and this noble hall has been adorned for the occasion. Innumerable waxlights make the gilding shine, and cast their rays over the

¹ See the *Univers* of February 23rd; from which the above is in great part taken.

spectators. All are seated. In the first tribune, to the right, is the Superior general, Brother Joseph, who, in recollection and prayer, is preparing to assist at the triumph of the glorious founder of his Institute. This day will certainly be the happiest of his life, and his deep and silent joy is shared by the six Assistants, Brothers Ozée, Louis de Poissy, Cyrus, Junien, Apronien-Marie and Raphaelis.

That Brother Adelminien, whose miraculous cure we have just related, is still alive, and held to be at the high festival, and there he was the living witness of a prodigy henceforth uncontested, and proclaimed by Rome. Count Stephen de Suzanne, the other miraculously cured one, was not able to take his place beside Brother Adelminien, and thank by his presence the powerful intercessor to whom he owes his life. But the family of the holy founder is represented at the foot of that altar where, presently, the first liturgical prayer will be offered up to the glory of Blessed de la Salle. Count de la Salle de Rochemaure, great-grand-nephew of John Baptist de la Salle, occupies a place of honor near the Vicars general of the diocese of Rheims, where the servant of God was born, and the diocese of Rouen, where he died. The other tribunes are filled with delegates of the Institute, who have hastened thither from all parts of the world, and will soon proclaim to all the nations of the earth, where they are teaching childhood and directing youth, the never-to-be forgotten memories of this day. We see a Brother from America elbowing a Brother from the Indies, a Spaniard side by side with an Englishman, and nothing could be more touching than the variety of so many nations all united in one and the same thought, in one and the same praise.

On the benches to the right and to the left, two hundred Brothers are grouped above twenty prelates. The Archbishops of Rouen and Besançon are seated there beside the Bishops of Orleans and Poitiers. Not far from them, Brother Robustinian, Postulator of the cause, is waiting for the sacred rite in which he is to take so prominent a part.

Before the function begins, there is time to take a view of the hall where this grand liturgical drama is about to be performed. Four vast canvases are spread upon the walls, and attract the eyes of all; three of them represent, as accurately as may be, those three miracles of Blessed de la Salle which the severity of Roman censure

has declared to be authentic beyond all dispute. Victoria Ferry, Brother Adelminien and young Stephen de Suzanne are represented receiving life and healing from the blessed servant of God. A fourth picture, more solemn than the others, shows us the saintly founder carried up to Heaven in the arms of angels. But, despite all the talent of the painter, these four scenes would not be understood were they not accompanied by these beautiful inscriptions printed in that lapidary style of which the Romans have preserved the secret.

The illustrious Father Angelini undertook to write these four legends in stately, epigraphical Latin which excites universal admiration in this unique assembly composed of so many scientific and literary men.

Suddenly there is a great hush; it is ten o'clock. The door behind the altar opens wide, and the officiating prelate appears, accompanied by two Canons of Saint Peter's. It is to a Belgian prelate, M^r de Neckere, that the chapter has confided the celebration of the august rite at which we are about to assist.

At a quarter past ten, the Cardinals of the sacred Congregation of Rites enter, wearing the *cappa magna* with white ermine. The Swiss guards, in that picturesque costume of the sixteenth century, go before them. The impression of solemnity deepens, all feel that something great is about to take place.

The decisive moment has come at last. Brother Robustinian, Postulator of the cause, rises, and, advancing towards Cardinal Bianchi, Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, asks him to promulgate the apostolical letters, in the form of a brief, whose object is "the Beatification of Blessed de la Salle, the Venerable servant of God."

But we must not forget that the assembly is being held in a hall which is attached to the Chapter of Saint Peter's, and it is proper that the head of this Chapter should here interfere to give his consent to this solemn proclamation. The consent is given, and amidst a silence of profound respect the brief is read¹. We can imagine the feelings of the whole assembly at this moment; above all, of Brother Joseph and his Religious; we can fancy what their

¹ The Feast of Blessed de la Salle, as a double of the first class, will be kept every year, on May 4th, in the dioceses of Rheims, Paris and Rouen, and in all the chapels of the Brothers.

emotion must have been beneath their external calm and self-contained joy.



Blessed de la Salle in glory. — Engraved by Pattier, from a composition of L. R. intended to perpetuate the memory of the festivities of the Beatification.

As soon as the reading of the brief is over, M^{rs} de Neckere entones in a loud voice the song of the Church in her triumphs and rejoicings— *Te Deum laudamus!*

Te Deum laudamus! We thank Thee, O, my God, for having sent this consolation to Thy Church in her heavy trials.

Te Deum laudamus! We thank Thee, O, my God, for giving such a testimony of Thy love to this holy instructor of children, in an hour when Christian education is subject to such perfidious and dangerous attacks.

Te Deum laudamus! We thank Thee, O, my God, in the name of those fifteen thousand spiritual sons of Blessed de la Salle; in the name of the oldest Brother and of the youngest novice, in the name of their three hundred thousand pupils; in the name of France, which has been the cradle of the Institute, and where, as M^{sr} d'Annecy so aptly said, "arose this sun which enlightens and warms the world of souls."

Scarcely had M^{sr} de Neckere begun to entone the *Te Deum*, when the veil which hid the picture of Blessed de la Salle and his relics was suddenly drawn aside. At the same moment, an indescribable harmony struck upon the ear; it was the bells of Saint Peter's ringing out the glad tidings to Rome and to the world. But, however imposing may be the language of bells, it needs to be translated, and the officiating prelate interprets it. The *Te Deum* is over, and M^{sr} de Neckere calls out in rhythmical tones of the utmost solemnity: *Blessed John Baptist de la Salle, pray for us!* This is the first time that invocation has been publicly uttered, and henceforth the world will reverberate with it to the end of time. All present make the liturgical response familiar to the children of the Church, and in which such high doctrine is condensed: *Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi*. For the first time, too, is heard that "proper" of the Blessed founder, and for the first time his relics are incensed. Then mass begins; the mass *Justus* of Confessors who are not Pontiffs. It is sung in music by the choristers of the Juliana chapel of Saint Peter's and the choir of Saint Saviour's in *Lauro*. The chaunts are noble and worthy of the festival; but they do not prevent the assistants from listening with recollection to that Collect, that Secret, that Postcommunion which, approved by the Congregation of Rites, will be to-morrow printed in all our missals, and recited by every priest at every altar all over the world.

At half past twelve, the first function is over.

But the Sovereign Pontiff has not yet appeared, and the last and

most solemn part of the rite, which is reserved for the afternoon of this memorable day, has yet to be accomplished.

The Pope, at four o'clock, enters the hall of canonization to venerate the relics and the image of Blessed de la Salle. He is received with great pomp by the Chapter of Saint Peter's, and the students



Commemorative medal struck in honor of the Beatification of Blessed de la Salle.
Engraved by Napier, from the original of A. Borel.

of the Vatican Seminary, who accompany him to the altar. The hall presents the same spectacle as in the morning; but now seculars occupy more of its space. It was essential that France should not be absent from these precincts where such honors have been discerned to a great Christian and a great Frenchman; and France is there, effectively, represented by her Ambassador, Count Lefebvre de Behaine, and by the whole staff of the Embassy in full dress. These Frenchmen are conscious of the august duty they are ful-

filling, and they accomplish it with respect. Leo XIII. is at the foot of the altar, and his prayer does not last less than half an hour amidst universal silence. What lofty thoughts, what thanksgiving, what ardent supplications go up in that prayer of the Sovereign Pontiff in which all present are silently joining! But, at last, the Pope rises, and the Superior general of the Institute of the Brothers offers him the usual oblations. These oblations consist in the life of Blessed de la Salle, his picture, a wonderful bouquet of flowers, above all in a filigree reliquary adorned with precious stones, and containing a relic of the Beatified servant of God. Leo XIII. then addresses to Brother Joseph and the Brothers who accompany him a few words in which the gentleness of the father tempers the majesty of the King. The great-grand-nephew of Blessed de la Salle is admitted with them to the favor of kissing the hand which blesses the City and the world. Then, the Sovereign Pontiff withdraws, and Vespers begin. With what joy the Brothers join in the *Magnificat!*

And now all is over, and the great day of the 19th of February 1888 is henceforth only a memory. But, in truth, it is a memory which will live as long as the Institute of Blessed de la Salle, that is to say, as long as Christian humanity; and it will re-echo to the end of time that prayer on which the Church, in introducing it into her liturgy, has set an indelible seal : —

“ O God, Who didst raise up the Blessed John Baptist, Confessor. to teach the poor the way of salvation, and to give science to little ones, and Who hast through him gathered together a new family in the Church, grant, we beseech Thee, unto all those that instruct Christian youth, always to follow his example and profit by his intercession. Through our Lord. Amen. ”

This prayer is the most lasting, and at the same time the most beautiful panegyric of Blessed de la Salle. It sums up this book, and by it will we end it *in Christo Jesu!*



Rome : Saint Peter's. — Drawn by Hubert Clerget; engraved by Méaulle.

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