

**SKETCH OF THE LIFE
OF HENRI
PLANCHAT**

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Sketch of the Life of Henri Planchat by Maurice Maignen & W. H. Anderson

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MAURICE MAIGNEN & W. H. ANDERSON

**SKETCH OF THE LIFE
OF HENRI
PLANCHAT**

SKETCH OF THE LIFE
OF
HENRI PLANCHAT,

PRIEST OF THE CONGREGATION OF BROTHERS OF ST. VINCENT OF PAUL,
CHAPLAIN TO THE PATRONAGE OF ST. ANNE FOR APPRENTICES
AND YOUNG WORKMEN, AT CHARONNE;
ONE OF THE HOSTAGES MASSACRED BY THE COMMUNE AT BELLEVILLE,
MAY 26, 1871, OUT OF HATRED TO RELIGION.

BY

MAURICE MAIGNEN,

Member of the Congregation of Brothers of St. Vincent of Paul.

Translated from the French.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY PREFACE

BY THE

REV. W. H. ANDERDON, S.J.



"Thy dead men shall live, my slain shall rise again."—ISAIAH XLV. 19.

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1877.

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PREFACE.

THIS vivid yet simple narrative of the life and martyrdom of a holy priest affords two topics of surpassing interest. His life was one of a devotion, a self-abandonment and detachment, that paved the way for the martyrdom which consummated all its previous sacrifices. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." When the friend to whom and for whose sake a human life is offered, is He Who has shown the way, and given grace and invitation to follow, then the death offered up to Him is invested, not with the stirring features of heroism only, or a meek and noble endurance of wrong: it is elevated into a likeness, supernatural and even awful in its sublimity, to His own life-giving Passion. As we follow the Abbé Planchat, and his companions in suffering, along that death-march which his biographer has well called their *Via Dolorosa*, tracking their exhausted yet resolute steps from La Roquette to the glorious termination in the Rue Haxo, we seem to recall

passages of the everlasting Gospel re-enacted before our eyes. Those priestly martyrs, uniting the oblation of their heart's blood with that of the altar on Calvary, have more of the drama of the Passion than ever was presented at Ammergau. They reproduce, to the letter, the circumstances of their Master's suffering. Pilate, too, and the other agents in His condemnation, rise again to our minds when, arrived at the *secteur*, or head-quarters of that department of the city, a chief executioner cries out to the surging, frantic multitude, "What is to be done with the hostages?" and there is one universal cry in answer: "Put them to death!" Again; how truly, in the very words of his Lord, might the meek, laborious priest—traversing for the last time on his dolorous way those squalid and vicious quarters of Paris that had witnessed his errands of charitable zeal—have addressed the pitiless multitudes, now clamouring for his blood: "When I was daily with you . . . you did not stretch your hands against me; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

It conveys an important lesson to mark the steps by which the prayerful, self-denying life of the subject of this memoir prepared him for martyrdom. That high grace is not usually won *extempore*. They who attain it have "disposed ascensions in their hearts" * by faithfulness to previous talents and opportunities.

* Psalm lxxxiii. 6.

We read, it is true, in the Church's records, of some who have redeemed a state of less perfection, or even an overt fall, by the supreme and crowning act of offering their blood for the truth. "Nothing in their lives became them like the leaving it." But such are exceptional cases, like a miraculous conversion. In the ordinary laws of the Divine government, "he that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound." He who executes the immediate round of his ministry and vocation, like the deacon ascending to the priesthood, "purchases to himself a good degree, and much confidence in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." So was it with the Abbé Planchat. During the years through which the present memoir follows his apostolical ministry, this good shepherd had given his cares and labours without stint for the flock purchased by the Precious Blood of the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls. At length, as a consequence, he was called to give his blood also. And thus, it may be repeated, the two things which stand out prominently in the little book here offered to the reader, have an obvious mutual relation—the laborious self-denying ministry, and the Christian heroism that sealed its close.

It may be hoped that the incidental notice obtained from these pages, regarding an institution so fertile in good as the Congregation of the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul, may prepare the way for its