

## SIDELIGHTS ON THE WAR

### GENERAL.

Mr. Belloc, lecturing at Queen's Hall, London, said that in August the numerical superiority of the Germans to the Entente Powers was as eight to six, that in April the proportion will be eight to eight, and in June ten to eight against Germany.

The five French Cardinals, the Archbishops of Rheims, Bordeaux, Paris, Montpellier, and Lyons, have sent an address to Cardinal Mercier, the Belgian Primate, expressing their admiration for his recent Pastoral, and associating themselves in sympathy with him in the grief inflicted by the invasion of his country and the devastation of its towns and villages, especially the destruction of the University of Louvain, with its library and priceless collection of historical possessions.

When Princess Mary's Christmas gifts to the troops at the front were being despatched, her Royal Highness deposited in one box a slip with the words:—'This box was packed by her Royal Highness the Princess Mary. The recipient should acknowledge its receipt to her Royal Highness Princess Mary, Buckingham Palace.' On February 3 the slip was received in Buckingham Palace, endorsed with the words:—'Thank you. Received by me, 9780, Private Fitzgerald, Royal Munster Fusiliers.'

Cardinal Bourne, on his return from France, expressed himself as greatly struck by the care taken of the British soldier in the fighting line, both in health and sickness. No precaution making for the men's comfort was omitted. The cheerfulness of the soldiers evoked the unlimited admiration, filled as they were with patient courage and heroic determination, inspired by the justice of our cause. They were fighting in defence not only of King and country and Empire, but of Christian civilisation. The Cardinal during his visit was received at general headquarters by Sir John French, who also paid a visit to the hospital ship *Asturias*, which the Germans torpedoed but failed to sink.

### AN ANGLICAN BISHOP ON THE CHURCH IN FRANCE.

The testimony of the Bishop of Oxford in his *Diocesan Magazine* to the fervor of French Catholics and of the virility of the Church in France is of much interest. His Lordship writes:

'I have recently been in France, and alike in towns and villages, on weekdays and Sundays, I have been struck by the response from men and women and children to the call to prayer. . . . I have also been very much struck with the increased emphasis which is being laid by the Church of that country on frequent and daily Communion. The notice runs in many churches that "frequent and daily Communion is the normal rule of the true Christian," which, if circumstances permit, is "within the competence of all." The rule of fasting is relaxed for the sick by dispensation. It is convenient (*convenable*) to make some preparation for Communion, but the degree of preparation must be according to each one's circumstances. The only obstacle to daily Communion is "some certainly mortal sin committed since the last good Confession." Such notices and the great number of communicants seen daily approaching the altars indicate a remarkable change in the practice of the Roman Communion at least in that country.'

### SINGING 'GOD SAVE IRELAND.'

Private Robert McGregor, of the Gordon Highlanders, writing to his father, who resides in Parkhead, Glasgow, gives the following thrilling account of an engagement with the Germans:—

'I am leaving the trenches, where we have been for about ten days, and we are now enjoying a well-earned rest at ——. You may have heard of the severe fighting by this time. It was awful, and I am sorry

to say many of our poor fellows will never come home again. On the night of December 26 we were informed that the Germans would make an attack on our trenches, so not an eye was closed that night. About four o'clock we thought it was a false alarm, and we settled to enjoy forty winks, when their artillery opened fire on us.

'Our guns were blazing away, and, I think, found the fellows who were annoying us, as their fire got slack, and finally ceased. This sort of thing was kept up till day dawned, and we lost (remainder of this sentence censored). Then we saw the Huns advancing as unconcerned as if on parade. On they came in close formation, and there must have been ten to one against us. We fired as hard as we could, but they seemed to come out of nowhere, and never halted. When they were getting too close we charged. It was our only chance. When they saw us leave the trenches they halted for a moment, but afterwards came on to meet us. I don't remember much of what took place then. It was stab and hack, hack and stab. You could hear the smash of gun against gun, the thud, thud, but beyond this there was an uneasy silence, broken sometimes by an oath and a groan. How long this went on I hardly know (but it seemed years to me). We drove them back about a hundred yards. Our officers saw the Germans reinforced, and sounded the retreat, but owing to a few machine guns we couldn't get back to our trenches. The Germans, now greatly increased, came on again, and our fellows, only about 170 left, got ready to meet what seemed certain death. But just at that moment we heard the sound of singing, and the song was "God save Ireland." It was the Connaught Rangers coming to our relief. I have seen some reckless Irishmen in my time, but nothing to match the recklessness and daring of those gallant Irishmen. They took the Germans on the left flank. The Germans now would probably number about 2000 against about 500 Connaughts and 170 of us; but had there been 5000 Germans I don't believe in my soul they could have stood before the Irish. They simply were irresistible and all the time kept singing "God save Ireland."

'One large red-haired son of Erin having broken through a possession of a German officer's sword, and everything that came in the way of this giant went down. I thought of Wallace. Four hundred and seventy Huns were killed and wounded, and we took 70 prisoners. Had it not been for the Irish I wouldn't be writing this, and when it comes to a hand-to-hand job there is nothing in the whole British Army to approach them. God Save Ireland and Irishmen.'

### THE SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE OF SOLDIER-PRIESTS.

An article on the spiritual influence of soldier-priests among their comrades on the battlefield is contributed to the *Daily Telegraph* by Mr. Philip Gibbs. In the course of his dispatch Mr. Gibbs says:

'It seems to me one of the tragic ironies of this war that men whose lives have been dedicated to the service of Christ, and whose hands should be clean of blood, find themselves compelled by the law of France (and in many cases urged by their own instincts of nationality) to serve as soldiers in the fighting ranks. Instead of denouncing from every pulpit the shamefulness of this bloody butchery which has made a mockery of our so-called civilisation and involved all humanity in its crime, those priests and monks have put themselves under discipline which sends them into the shambles in which they must kill or be killed. When the mobilisation orders were issued to the able-bodied manhood of the nation the call to the colors was sent to young curates and abbots throughout the country and to young monks belonging to Religious Orders banished by its politicians. Jesuits and Dominicans, Franciscans and Carmelites, who had been exiled from France for conscience' sake, hurried back at the first summons, dispensed from that Canon Law which forbids them to shed blood, and as Frenchmen,