

devils, and to-day, as yesterday, our batteries are smashing their parapets, and blowing down block-houses, and killing their working parties. . . . Guns of great calibre come swinging out of the holds, and machine-guns and field pieces follow with a rapidity which makes men say "Bravo, Woolwich!" and "Things are all right on the Clyde." Whatever the newspaper men may say or fail to say, the true lesson is that our fighting strength is assured so long as these supplies come in, and that the enemy will find it harder in the new year to provide the material upon which the ultimate victory depends. . . . I am one of those who believe, after a study of the facts, that next year will bring peace, and for that reason when the bells of the French villages here ring out the old year a herald of hope will bring in the new. A splendid hope!

CATHOLIC V.C.'S NOW TOTAL FOURTEEN.

The recent list of four new recipients of the Victoria Cross contained the names of two Catholics—Sergt. Sam Meekosha, 1/6 Battn. W. Yorkshire Regt. (T.F.) and Private John Caffrey, 2nd York and Lancaster Regt. Sergt. Meekosha, who is 22 years of age, had previously received the D.C.M. His mother is of Irish extraction, and his father a Russian Pole. As a boy he attended St. Joseph's School, Bradford. He was recently promoted from the rank of corporal. The official record of Sergt. Meekosha's gallant act reads:—

For most conspicuous bravery near the Yser on November 19, 1915. He was with a platoon of about 20 non-commissioned officers and men, who were holding an isolated trench. During a very heavy bombardment by the enemy six of the platoon were killed and seven wounded, while all the remainder were more or less buried. When the senior non-commissioned officers had been either killed or wounded Corporal Meekosha at once took command, sent a runner for assistance, and, in spite of no fewer than 10 more big shells falling within 20 yards of him, continued to dig out the wounded and buried men in full view of the enemy and at close range from the German trenches. By his promptness and magnificent courage and determination he saved at least four lives.

Private John Caffrey, aged 24 years, was educated at St. Barnabas' Cathedral School, Nottingham, and was previously awarded the St. George's Cross for bringing in a wounded officer under fire. The *London Gazette* supplement records the brave deed which has been recognised by the bestowal of the V.C. as follows:—

For most conspicuous bravery on November 16, 1915, near La Brique. A man of the West Yorkshire Regiment had been badly wounded and was lying in the open unable to move, in full view of, and about 300 to 400 yards from the enemy's trenches. Corporal Stirk, R.A.M.C., and Private Caffrey at once started out to rescue him, but at the first attempt they were driven back by shrapnel fire. Soon afterwards they started again under close sniping and machine-gun fire, and succeeded in reaching and bandaging the wounded man, but just as Corporal Stirk had lifted him on Private Caffrey's back, he himself was shot in the head. Private Caffrey put down the wounded man, bandaged Corporal Stirk, and helped him back into safety. He then returned and brought in the man of the West Yorkshire Regiment. He had made three journeys across the open under close and accurate fire and had risked his own life to save others with the utmost coolness and bravery.

With the above awards Catholic soldiers have secured 9.3 per cent. of the Victoria Crosses granted in the present war, or 14 out of a total of 150.

FRENCH HOSTAGES.

Almost every day (writes the Paris correspondent of the *Catholic Times*) we hear of civilians from the districts held by the Germans being sent back to France via Switzerland, and, in the main, the accounts given by these unfortunate people are identical. An important group of ten notable hostages, among whom was the Prefect of Lille, a senator, Mayor of Noyon, and

several landed proprietors of note, arrived in Paris recently after fifteen months' captivity. They were exchanged by the French Government for ten German hostages, and the arrangement that made them free was not concluded without considerable difficulty. The Frenchmen are dignified and reticent in their account of all they suffered, but it is evident that to these ex-prisoners, most of whom are well over sixty, the crowning torture of their long captivity was the utter isolation and secrecy to which they were condemned. Against M. de F—, one of these hostages, the only accusation made was that in his chateau there was a wireless telegraph that conveyed news to the French troops. A strict search was organised; no wireless apparatus was discovered, for the good reason that none had ever existed; but M. de F—, an old man in ill-health, was none the less condemned to solitary confinement in a fortress, while his wife, daughter, and grand-children were carried away from their home and sent to Germany, whence they were conveyed to Switzerland. After forty-two days of absolute isolation, during which no echo from the outer world reached him, M. de F— was removed to another prison, where he found other hostages, and also many common criminals who shared their imprisonment. The foul prison of Radstat proved the last painful stage of his weary pilgrimage; the next was Switzerland, where the hostages were received with demonstrations of welcome that gave them a foretaste of the greetings that awaited them in their own country.

Another exodus of old men, women, and children from districts that are in the enemy's hands was headed by four Sisters of Charity, who since August, 1914, have been detained in the little town of H—. One of these, Sister Agnes, a brave, sensible, intelligent woman, related her experiences to a friend of mine. Once since the beginning of the war she was able, through the good-will of a German officer who wished to recognise her valuable services, to send a line to her superiors in Paris, to assure them that she and her companions were alive and unharmed. She, like others, had the impression that, in spite of their blustering and brutality, the Germans, if faced with fearlessness, might sometimes be amenable to remonstrances; they are never so cruel and rough as when they deal with timid souls. More than once the Sisters, who never lost their coolness or showed any fear, were able to protect the helpless people dependent on them against the enemy's vexations.

RECRUITING IN IRELAND

THE LORD LIEUTENANT'S REPORT.

Lord Wimborne's report on recruiting in Ireland was issued on January 31. His Excellency says:—

The present time seems opportune for a survey of the contribution by Ireland to the Armed Forces of the Crown, and a statement of the machinery by which it is hoped the flow of recruits to the colors will be maintained during the continuance of the present war. On August 1, 1913, there were serving in the Army 20,780 Irishmen—on the outbreak of the war 17,804 Reservists and 12,462 Special Reservists rejoined, making a total on mobilisation of 51,046 men. Subsequently three new divisions—i.e., the 10th, the 36th, and the 16th,—consisting of 12 battalions each, were organised, making with the original 16 Irish battalions of the Regular Forces a total of 52 battalions. Simultaneously the Reserve brigades were expanded or called into existence for the purpose of feeding divisions at the front and making good the waste of war. On October 9, 1915, the total number of enlistments since the outbreak of war amounted to 75,293, giving a grand total of 126,339 of pre and post war enlistments. In the same month the War Office indicated that

The Primary Task for Ireland was the maintenance at war strength of these 52 battalions. An examination of twelve months' experience