

CARE OF THE WOUNDED

NOBLE WORK OF FRENCH CATHOLICS.

A book has just been published (writes the Paris correspondent of the *Catholic Times*) that throws an interesting light upon the part played by the Catholics of the diocese of Paris in the alleviation of the miseries caused by the war. Its author is M. Paul Delay. The first volume of his work treats of the diocese of Paris; the others, that are soon to follow, will show the Catholics at work in the other dioceses of France, at the front, in the regions held by the enemy, and among the prison camps of Germany. The book has its use and importance. Its title, *Les Catholiques au Service de la France*, informs the public of the author's purpose; in a country where the anti-clerical Government naturally influences a certain section of the public, it is useful to enlighten opinion as to the services rendered by the maligned and oppressed Catholics at a moment of supreme trial. He reminds his readers that, during the years that preceded the war, the Government did its best to substitute official for private charity. The tendency still exists, but the tremendous demands created by circumstances have favored the development of individual charitable works, suggested and directed by Catholics.

The French Red Cross Society.

Thus, although the French Red Cross Society has gratefully acknowledged the generous assistance extended to it by Protestant and Jewish associations, yet it would be childish to deny that the majority of its workers are believing and practising Catholics. The seminaries and convents of the diocese of Paris were, from the outset of the war, put at the disposal of the military and Red Cross authorities for the use of the wounded. M. Delay quotes the words of the superioress of a community of Sisters of Charity, who, when the first batch of wounded soldiers arrived, exclaimed: 'I never could have believed that I should have had so great an honor and so great a happiness.' The feeling thus expressed was general: the wounded soldiers were received as martyrs, whose sufferings are the safeguard and ransom of our country. M. Delay underlines the utter absence of bitterness with which the religious, banished and robbed by the French Government, forgot their grievances: the men eagerly flocked back to serve as soldiers or chaplains; the women, with the same generosity, took up their stand at the bedside of the wounded fighting men.

The Military Chaplains.

M. Delay devotes some pages to the question of the military chaplains. Before the war, there were four official military chaplains for a 'corps d'armee,' that is to say, for 30,000 men. It is true that, 22,000 priests being called upon to serve as soldiers, their mere presence brought a religious element within reach of many fighting men, but the soldier-priests had military duties to perform, and their apostolate was thereby hampered. Count Albert de Mun interpreted the desires of the French Catholics in August, 1914, and, through his influence, M. Viviani, President of the Council, an open freethinker, consented to permit voluntary chaplains, provided with the consent of their bishops and the approbation of the highest military authorities, to proceed to the army zone. He objected that no fund existed out of which they might be paid, whereupon a subscription was opened that, in the space of a few days, brought in 100,000 francs. Since then the Comte de Mun has closed his noble life, but his work is now carried on by M. Geoffroy de Grandmaison, who directs the 'bureau' where voluntary chaplains offer their services with a good will, an ardor, an apostolic zeal that, given the age of the candidates, is inexpressibly touching. They have to be restrained rather than encouraged; as all the able-bodied men under forty-five are subjected to military service, the chaplains are necessarily middle-aged men. The direc-

tor of the 'bureau' often marvels at the joyous courage with which they go to meet fatigues that have shortened the lives of many brave volunteers. The fact that a large number of them have been mentioned in despatches and decorated at the front proves with what utter self-forgetfulness they have fulfilled the duties of their calling. M. Delay reminds his readers that the voluntary chaplains are now paid by Government; it has recognised the value of the moral influence that keeps up the soldier's courage and inflames his spirit of sacrifice. This is a consequence of the war that is worth noting. It is among the happy symptoms that lead us to believe, not indeed in the wholesale conversion of the nation, but in the destruction of many false ideas and in the enlightening of many sincere minds, hitherto hampered by prejudice or ignorance.

The Germans and 'Missing' Frenchmen.

The uncertain fate of those among our fighting men who are reported as 'missing' is a sore trial in many homes. The other day, in the Cathedral of Blois, where he was presiding over a meeting of soldiers, a military chaplain, the Abbe Rotier read a letter which he had received from a friend, reported 'missing' since August 22, 1914, two years ago. This soldier relates how, having been wounded and made a prisoner three weeks after hostilities were declared, he was transferred to a prisoners' camp in the French provinces which the Germans hold. Here he found 800 other soldiers, who were employed in digging trenches: if they attempted to resist they were put in prison, starved, or bound to a post. They were strictly forbidden to communicate with their families. Indeed, they had no means of doing so: it was impossible for them to make their condition known to their former comrades; they were, in fact, cut off from all communication with the outer world. They were delivered, a month ago, when the French troops took possession of the village where this camp was situated. The fact that the writer gives his name and the number of his regiment, the 113th Infantry Regiment, added to the publicity given to his letter by a military chaplain whose name carries weight, leads us to believe in the authenticity of the letter. It may raise hopes among parents and wives whose loved ones are missing, but, on the other hand, it opens vistas of unsuspected suffering that will be fully revealed only when the regions now held by the enemy have become ours once more!

Wounded German Prisoners.

It is pleasant, when we read of the hardships inflicted by the Germans on our soldiers, to recall certain incidents that prove the difference in the treatment extended to the wounded German prisoners in France. An account has just been published in Germany, where a supposed eye-witness related the cruel usage of the German wounded who were brought into Paris two years ago, during the night of September 14, 1914, after the battle of the Marne. They were over three hundred in number, and were taken to the Val de Grace. A young surgeon, who was present on the occasion, protests against the German assertion that these helpless men were uncared for, that they were given neither clean linen nor a drop of water to quench their thirst! He and his comrades relate that these Germans, who had been left for five days without care, were discovered by the French troops and were in a pitiable condition when brought to the Val de Grace. 'We removed them from their stretchers with infinite care, and endeavored to save them unnecessary pain. Some among them, who could not speak, kissed our hands in gratitude.' It would be unfair to regard as applying generally the accusations that roused the French doctor's indignation.

Thanks from German Officers.

Two German lieutenants who were tended at the Val de Grace in September, 1914, wrote to thank the head surgeon for the 'exceptional and cordial' care bestowed upon them at the incriminated hospital. Knowing that the surgeon to whom the letter is addressed had a brother, who is a prisoner in Germany, the two officers added these words: 'We hope that our