

HEROIC FRENCH LIVES

CRUSADING SPIRIT REVIVED.

The Marquis de Vague, whose recent death is a serious loss to the French Red Cross Society, was a man of varied attainments and considerable influence (writes the Paris correspondent of the *Catholic Times*, under date November 26). A descendant of an ancient family of the 'Vivaraïs,' a mountainous district of northern France, he numbered among his ancestors many brilliant soldiers, beginning with the Crusader Bertrand de Vague, in 1191. The Vagues of the present day are not unworthy of their race, and in the war from which we are all suffering the Crusader's descendants have nobly played their part.

A Many-Sided Man.

The Marquis de Vague was a many-sided man. He began life as a diplomat, and was for some time attached to the French Embassy at St. Petersburg. He was also an archæologist. He travelled in Syria, Egypt, and Greece, and made a thorough study of the monuments of the Holy Land. His works on this subject have great authority, and his knowledge of Eastern languages and problems gained for him many marks of distinction. In 1870 he was vice-president of the French Red Cross Society, and followed the armies of Lorraine, devoting himself to the wounded. Among the dead soldiers whose remains he rescued was his own brother, who fell at Reichsoffen. In 1871 M. Thiers sent M. de Vague as French Ambassador to Constantinople, a post for which his knowledge of the East fitted him excellently. When M. Grevy became President of the French Republic, M. de Vague retired into private life. He was a fervent agriculturist, also passionately fond of history and archæology, an excellent writer, and one of the most distinguished members of the French Academy.

Red Cross Society's Work.

The last years of his long career were devoted to the work of the French Red Cross Society, of which he was the President. His judgment, experience, high ideals, and enlightened patriotism made him the efficient leader of this army of charity, which for the last sixteen months has brought assistance to thousands of our fighting men. To his intellectual and moral gifts the Marquis de Vague added the exterior qualifications that make an imposing chief. He was unusually tall, with a fine countenance, and to the end he kept his upright bearing. He had the somewhat grave courtesy of a 'grand seigneur,' and, in this democratic age, was a typical representative of a race of men who are daily becoming more rare. He was, moreover, a practical Catholic. This descendant of the Crusaders remained true to the faith that he had inherited with his blood.

Self-Sacrificing P.P. as Chaplain.

The clergy of Paris have suffered heavily by the war. One of the last victims is the Abbe Joseph de Ruble, of Vitry-sur-Seine. He was a zealous and popular parish priest, whose ministry gained many souls to God, especially among the men of his flock. His cordiality won their hearts, and his apostolic zeal soon brought many of them back to the religious practices that they had laid aside. His best-beloved among his parishioners were the poor, to whom he gave largely, and for whose service he was ready to be called day and night. At the beginning of the war he solicited the post of military chaplain, and was speedily appointed. He took a high view of his new duties. If I am to do good to my soldiers,' he wrote, 'I must be one with 'le bon Dieu.' The war ought to help my training as a priest.'

Holy Communion in the Trenches.

In June, 1915, he wrote of the consolation he found in giving Holy Communion in the trenches. 'Many officers and soldiers go to Holy Communion every day in the trenches. I notice that these communicants are the elite, both in military and in civil

life. Many adorers of the Blessed Sacrament come to pray in my dug-out.' In another letter he relates how, in the evenings, he says prayers for these worshippers and makes a short meditation aloud for their benefit. He was in the habit, after his Mass every morning, of going to the trenches; it was here, when hurrying to assist a wounded soldier, that he was grievously injured by a shell. He was carried to the nearest dressing station, where his wounds were attended to; he was fully conscious, and, calling a soldier priest, he asked for Extreme Unction and begged the priest to remove the Holy Eucharist, which he carried on his person.

Calmly Awaiting the End.

He then lay quiet and peaceful, gently attentive to and grateful for the care that was taken of him, wholly resigned to the Will of God. Next morning one of his fellow-chaplains brought him Holy Communion, and in the evening he was removed to the Hospital of Chalons, where he died the next day. The Abbe B., his superior and his friend, remarks that the grief of the soldiers was immense. They said: 'We often remonstrated with him, when he came to dangerous places: "Monsieur l'Aumonier, why do you come here?" He answered: "Why? Because I love you, my friends, and you are here." He was so brave that it was good to see him.' Speaking from his own experience of the dead priest, the Abbe B. adds: 'I never knew a priestly conscience higher, nobler, and purer than his.'

Premonitions of Death.

It is a curious and often repeated fact that many of our officers and soldiers seem to have a clear view, call it a presentiment or a forewarning, of death. Numerous cases of this have come to my knowledge—the cases of men whose solid and enlightened religious convictions were on a level with their personal courage and strong sense of duty. It is as if an angel's whisper led them beforehand to face the coming sacrifice, thus considerably increasing its value by making their preparation more perfect.

A Brave Young Officer's Case.

A young officer whose case touched me closely, on whose head rested the hopes and affections of two families and many dependents, and whose influence for good was precious throughout the region where his home is situated, seemed, last May, to have the absolute certainty that he would never come back. To the village Cure, who had just heard his confession, he said, looking at the fair prospect of hill and dale that frames his home: 'I shall never come back to the place I love. I found it very hard to accept the sacrifice, it cost me great pain; but now I have made it and I offer it up for my children.' A week ago the speaker was shot through the head when leading his men forward in the Somme, over ground soaked and hallowed with the best blood of France.

Resigned to God's Will.

The months that had passed since the May evening when, by the side of his parish priest, he looked for the last time on his home, brought him much moral and physical suffering, complete isolation, deprivation of every kind of material and intellectual resource, and, sharper than the rest, the pain of a wrench that he seemed to *know* was close at hand. Yet—his letters prove it—his will remained firm and his acceptance of the Will of God was complete, as he prayerfully and painfully trod the Via Crucis leading to death and also, we trust, to eternal rest. Since then, letters have come to those who mourn for him telling how close to God he lived, how often the chaplain of the regiment brought him Holy Communion in the trenches, how his men loved and admired him, how, knee-deep in water, surrounded by the dead and dying, during more than a week, he remained ever faithful to the thoughts of 'home and Heaven.'

For washing lace curtains NO RUBBING LAUNDRY HELP is best.