SIDELIGHTS ON THE WAR

GENERAL.

Archbishop Duhig, speaking in Brisbane the other day, said if they asked themselves who were bearing the brunt of this colossal war on the side of the Allies they must see that the overwhelming majority were Catholics. In the countries represented amongst the Allies to-day he found there were 109,710,000 of a Catholic population as compared with 52,000,000, or less than half of the Protestant populations.

A story of the seriousness with which gallant France is taking the war was told by Major Lampen, D.S.O., in the course of a lecture at the Returned Soldiers' Club in Wellington last week. In one place, he said, he found himself billeted in a most comfortable house, every hospitality being shown him. In the sitting-room was a piano, and turning to the daughter of the house he asked her, 'Do you play?' 'Yes,' was the reply. 'And sing?' 'Yes,' again was the answer. 'Then I hope I may hear you,' he continued. To this the girl replied, 'I do not sing or play until the war is over.' The story spoke for itself, and everywhere in France it was the same. Every frivolity, every amusement was put aside until the war was won. Major Lampen considered it was a privilege for the New Zealanders to be fighting beside the French soldiers, and they would gain much from the contact.

Mr. Edison, in an article in the *Matin*, has expressed his admiration for France and England. We quote the following extracts given by the *Times*:— France is, of all nations, the nation that has sought most for, and most nearly approached truth. France has had a real aristocracy, not an aristocracy of money as ours, nor an aristocracy of birth like the British, but an aristocracy based on merit. Every really good American to-day recognises that France and England are fighting the battle we should fight. Those who do not think so are either bad Americans or ignorant Americans. It is to me a great humiliation to think that we have not done more to aid the Allies. The power of England on the seas has been a good thing for the United States and as profitable for us as for England. It has been profitable for all humanity, including the nations to-day fighting against Great Britain. I wish with all my strength, and real Americans wish as I do, that that power may never diminish either in material or moral force. The triumph of civilisation depends on it.

Attention has been called to the wide employment of electric pocket lamps in the present war. According to a special correspondent of the *New York Times*, electric pocket lamps have played an important role in at least one engagement around Verdun, namely, the retaking of the Haudromont quarries by the French, of which he says in part: 'Under ground in the quarries the darkness was absolute save when bursting grenades showed brief visions of carnage and terror. Friend often grapples friend, until the French adopted the plan of fastening an electric pocket lamp to the tunic button. The light gave the Germans a better mark, but enables the French to rally together and sweep the foe back in the final rush *en masse*.'

CHRISTMAS ON THE HILLSIDE.

In the *Daily News*, Captain Stephen Gwynn thus describes a scene on a hillside somewhere in France on Christmas morning: —

'Irish were the close ranked men who stood in the roadway. Irish those of my own company drawn up in a half-circle behind me on the grass; but Ireland has never seen them in that array, stained, thigh-booted, with rifles slung, gas respirators in position, and equipment on, ready for action at an instant's notice. Nearer at hand, the bank facing us was adorned with the military architecture of the moment; tunnelled into, revetted and shored up with great walls of yellowish sandbags—an architecture designed for the modest purpose of avoiding sight. To that end comfort and even decency must attorn; men lie thick in these shelters, worst housed of animals. It needs some notable occasion to bring out these cave-dwellers from huddling in the dark, and to keep them standing massed in the open—such a mark as gunners hardly dream of, and only a few furlongs behind the line. And surely it was no common event. In the low doorway of one of the large dug-outs, the first-aid station, a table was set, spread with a white cloth, and by it stood a white-haired man in white robes—the priest ministering. Facing him were the two companies, equipped at all points save one; they stood bare-headed, their steel helmets lay on the ground beside them or dangled from their hands. Most were reading in the little books of devotion which nearly every Irish soldier carries, for in that gale the priest's voice was inaudible; the only sound was now and then the silver tinkle of a bell which marks the Mass's high periods. Every man there must have guessed and most, for most had seen a year's service, knew well what risk we were taking; but when the Communion began, it seemed as though the whole assembly desired to press to that table so strangely set. Indeed, so far back was it within the narrow mouth of the dug out that the priest came out on to the footboards and administered to the men as they passed, not kneeling but standing to receive the consecrated element.

THE IRISH DIVISION: A BIG, CHEERY FAMILY.

From Filson Young, with the British Army in France.

War is a great uniter of differences—in the field at any rate. Peace, which is its end, is also one of its by-products, and among all its violent contrasts and contradictions nothing is more curious than the way in which peaceful bonds are forged out of the quarrels that are resolved in its fiery crucible.

Anyone ignorant of Ireland or of war might suppose that the Irish Division, to which I paid a visit yesterday, and in which men from every part of Ireland are gathered, would be seething with cliques, alliances, feuds, and active or latent bitterness, but of course it is not so. On the contrary, the men are one united family, and there is no Irish question at the front.

Men who have fought as the men of this magnificent fighting unit have fought, side by side and yard by yard, through the dreadful bit of ground between Guillemont and Ginchy, are not likely to have many differences. In such moments there is neither Catholic nor Protestant, orange nor green, but only friend and foe in the ultimate and final sense. It is Sinn Fein with a vengeance—ourselves alone, and those who are not for us are very definitely against us. And when a man from Belfast and a man from Clare come round the corner of a ruined wall on half a dozen Germans with bombs in their hands the degree of unanimity to which they attain is surprising.

After Guillemont.

I had some highly informal but deeply interesting talks with odd groups of men in the Royal Irish, the Munsters, the Connaughts, the Dublins, and the Inniskillings. They were men of all kinds, all faiths, all politics, all degrees, but the impression they produced was uniform. They were all Irishmen, they were all out for a blood fight, they all had it to a degree that neither I nor you can imagine and they all wanted more. They had recently come as I said from that gory corner that won us Guillemont on September 10, that gave us Ginchy, and so made possible the great doings of September 15. They all hoped they would never see Guillemont again. But when I tried to draw from them some idea of what they would really like next it was obvious that it was another Guillemont or Ginchy—only in this new place.

I sought out some men from my own part of Ulster, and heard their familiar speech, associated for me with green and quick by-ways, with rocks and seaweed and the roar of tides, telling of these bloody