

SIDELIGHTS ON THE WAR

GENERAL.

The British Government has conferred its "medal of distinguished conduct" on the Rev. Dr. George M. Sauvage, C.S.C., a Professor at the Catholic University of America, who has been at the war front for some time, where he rendered eminent service while with the British Expeditionary Force in France. He was sent by the French Government to act as interpreter for the English, but his priestly zeal led him to use an opportunity for heroic religious work.

There is one college in Belgium which has so far escaped all the furies of the war and has continued its ordinary existence. It is, curiously enough, the College of Notre Dame de la Paix, the new title where-with our Lady of Peace is invoked now in the Litany. At the commencement of the war a shell fell on the college, breaking glass and damaging the kitchen, but since then no further hurt has been suffered. In October, 1914, the courses of preparation and humanities were resumed, also the course of mathematics, but not the faculties of philosophy and science. There are sixty boarders and the day school flourishes, although in February and March last both schools were closed on account of the order to economise coal. Father Demal is still rector, Father Colmant is professor of rhetoric, and Father Chaineux not only teaches Greek and Latin, but visits Ecloo and other places to instruct the convent schools.

WHERE THE RESPONSIBILITY RESTS.

Branding as utterly absurd, charges that the Vatican was in some mysterious manner responsible for the recent Italian reverses, Cardinal Gasparri, according to late despatches from Rome, has issued a statement of the Vatican's peace position.

The criticism of the Vatican, it appears (comments the *North-West Review* of Winnipeg), was not originated in Italy, where the causes of the military disaster were known, but it appears to have been freely circulated among other Allied nations. It is declared to have been part of an organised propaganda directed against the Vatican.

Cardinal Gasparri's authorised statement follows: "The Holy Father is not preparing any new appeal looking toward peace. His earnest desire, many times manifested, for a just, Christian and durable peace, is unchanged and cannot change. Who can crave anything else and call himself a Christian?"

"To say that his Holiness favors or has favored, or will favor an unjust, unchristian, and unendurable peace, is not only false, but also absurd. Any propaganda for such a peace, alleged to be conducted at the Vatican's inspiration, especially in certain nations, is the product of pure maliciousness.

"The Catholic Church has always regarded true patriotism as a Christian duty and a Christian virtue, and still so teaches. The fact that the Italian Parliament has had warm eulogy for the clergy should be sufficient to refute the calumnies which irresponsible persons have circulated and are circulating in the foreign world. Malicious insinuations propagated in America, and the tendency to attribute in great part to the Italian clergy responsibility for the recent situation, must be denounced. In Italy no fair-minded person is attributing the situation to the clergy.

"When the disruptive propaganda began to affect the morale of the Italian army, the clergy in general and also army chaplains, following the instructions and the example of the Chaplain-in-Chief, labored to counteract it and elevate the morale of the troops. More than once the army chaplains informed the Chaplain-in-Chief, who informed the supreme civil authorities, of the disruptive movement that was creeping in—and all this, long before the publication of the Papal Note.

"The true causes of the recent Italian reverses are perfectly well understood in Italy, and the shoulders on which rests the responsibility are well known,

a responsibility which certainly does not touch the Catholic clergy and, least of all, the august person of the Sovereign Pontiff."

CHAPLAINS AND OFFICERS.

The Rev. Dr. Aveling in the *Catholic World* has given some interesting war impressions of a chaplain in France in 1915-16. Speaking of his arrival at the headquarters of his battalion—a north-east England one—at Fricourt, he says:—"What pleasure when I passed the sentries and reached the headquarters of my old battalion situated in dug-outs on the reverse slope of a little hill! What a greeting was given to me! If there had been any danger run in coming up to make this informal evening call, it was more than repaid by the large-hearted welcome of the H.Q. staff—not one of whom, be it noted, was a Catholic. They made one feel not only that one was at home there in every sense of the word, but that it was their own padre who had thus 'blown in' to visit them. Of course the Catholic chaplain is really posted to a brigade, and not to a single battalion, but as he is attached to the latter, it often claims him as peculiarly its own; and as a general rule its officers make him feel that he is a very intimate member of a select little family, from whom they expect much affection and devotion, and for whom they are ready to do almost anything. But this last is true pretty much of all the officers in the brigade. It is this spirit of true comradeship which makes the chaplain's work among his men much easier to do, and helps and inspires the priest himself in doing his work."

Father Aveling goes on to say—"Personally, I never had anything but the greatest consideration and kindness shown to me by all the officers with whom I had to deal; and in the formation to which I was posted—a south-east of England one—one could count the Catholic officers almost on the fingers of one hand. Many of them, in all probability, had never met a Catholic priest or been in any way intimate with one before the war. It is not difficult to appreciate the amount of prejudice that has been and is being dissipated by such a state of things as this, repeated again and again throughout the whole British army, and in all the circumstances of the intimate and actual and limited interest of life at the front which I have endeavored to portray. I think I am not alone among the Catholic priests with the British Expeditionary Force—priests from England, Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—in being able to say that some of the warmest and staunchest friendships we have ever made have been with non-Catholic officers and men—friendships formed in the throes of war and cemented by the common dangers of the front line. It is a small thing, perhaps, and a very personal one; but my evening visit in August, 1915, to the trenches in front of Fricourt Cemetery will always be one of the memories that I shall carry through my life, and not the least because of the real affection and regard which I found awaiting me there."

Dr. Aveling then gives his impressions of the effects of the war upon the souls and hearts of the soldiers. He says that while waiting the moment of attack problems that plumb the very abyss of human thought—the question is it blind fate or Divine Providence that orders the affairs of this world—are pondered over and answered, even though in a dumb, inarticulate way. He writes:—"Though their language is not choice; though their doing will not always square with the right solution of a case of casuistry, the British soldier, I believe, has reached and realised some living notion of the truth of the Fatherhood of God, some vital idea of the Brotherhood of Man, some very real glimpse of the meaning of sacrifice and of vicarious sacrifice, some solid grasp of a 'beyond,' which depends, in a large measure, upon his personal effort and uprightness. Surely that is something gained. Faith may be and is a gift of God; but I believe the natural foundations of that faith are being laid in the odd moments of reflection which are interposed between the comparative safety of camps at home or on the lines of communication, and the personal struggle for life of