

## SIDELIGHTS ON THE WAR

## GENERAL.

A correspondent in Paris of the *New York Sun* says that the famous statue of the Blessed Virgin which surmounted the Cathedral of Albert has been saved from German pillage and has been hidden in a safe place. It was erected in the thirteenth century.

The *Washington Post* has printed a cable message from George R. Brown, its special correspondent with the American army in France, which makes this remarkable statement:—"On the broad highway that leads straight into the German lines at Montdidier is a famous and beautiful shrine. On the lofty crucifix the white figure of the Saviour is almost life size. It stands at a crossroad, and the French signboard on a post at the turn of the road informs the passer-by that Montdidier is distant ten kilometres. That road has been shell-swept for weeks, for over it troops and munition trains and supplies for the men directly at the front are taken every day. The crucifix has been under shell fire here since the offensive began on May 4, but although bombs and shrapnel have fallen all around that serene figure, it has not been touched."

The French military authorities, in issuing photographs of the removal from Rheims of Dubois' equestrian statue of Joan of Arc—which formerly stood in the Cathedral Square—might at the same time have told something of the very remarkable experiences which the statue has undergone. Its repeated—indeed, almost continuous—escape from destruction is wonderful. In the three and a-half years during which Rheims has been under fire, the statue, we are told, was only once struck. Even then it was not a direct hit, although there are plenty of shell craters all about its site. A flying fragment of shell snapped the blade of the sword in the rider's uplifted hand; otherwise the fine piece of sculpture was absolutely untouched, even during the awful blast of fire which finally laid the city in ruins. Its removal, a task of considerable danger, was undertaken by military engineers. It was lifted down from its pedestal and placed upon a lorry, on which, covered with flowers, it was transported to the nearest railway station and thence to a place of safety chosen by the Ministry of Fine Arts. The pedestal remains in readiness for the statue's return.

## A REDEMPTORIST HERO.

Father Kavanagh, a Redemptorist priest, who was a chaplain with the army that entered the city of Jerusalem, was killed in action by a Turkish bullet, being shot in the head, and was buried on the Mount of Olives. He had hoped to say Mass in Jerusalem or Bethlehem on Christmas Day, but was called to eternity a few days before. His last letter written to his sister makes intensely interesting and realistic reading (states an exchange). One brief paragraph tells us:—

"Somehow the usual camel convoy was unable to reach us and the men suffered an agony of thirst. Perhaps Daniel de Foe could describe it: I certainly cannot. There was a khamshen (hot wind) blowing; marching and then excitement dry one up, and by noon scores of the men were delirious. The worst cases were brought to the ambulances screaming for water. A tumblerful was left in my bottle, which I divided between four officers, whose lips were split and covered with a green slime. That afternoon I had a burial service—undenominational, of course,—and, literally, I could not articulate without keeping my hand to my mouth, and pulling my lower lip off my teeth, while bullets from a concealed sniper whizzed past us. In the evening water came in, enough to give each one bottle—quite inadequate."

## "A CRUSADER OF FRANCE."

One wonders (says the *Catholic Columbian*), referring to the Catholic chaplains and soldiers engaged in the present stupendous conflict, how these men find time or courage to write, and yet some of this war

literature, written in the very jaws of death, will live for years.

A notable example of this is the number of letters written by a French Captain (Ferdinand Belmont) and translated into English and published in his country under the title of *A Crusader of France*. These letters written to his family breathe the finest spirit of Catholicity and the noblest fire of patriotism. All through the lines run the jubilant note of how he still now and then was granted the privilege of hearing Mass. One place he writes: "This morning, in a wretched shelter of stones and branches, a soldier-priest said Mass for us, shells shrieking the while in the grey sky. What fervor and poetry and value these Masses, celebrated no matter where, on temporary altars by soldiers and for soldiers, assume!" Again later he writes on All Saints' Day: "This morning we had Mass in the bowels of the mountains, in the depths of the cavern . . . it was in the silence and security of this unlooked-for refuge that the Abbe Darlier, the young division chaplain, celebrated the Mass for the small number of true believers whom this novel temple could receive. If I had been a painter, or if I had known how to depict with a few pencil strokes the most striking episodes of the campaign, I should not have failed to record that most original and touching scene, 'Mass in the Catacombs of Schratzmaennele.'" After all, as has been said, "it is the Mass" for the Catholic soldier; here is another incident, told in the *Boston Pilot*, of Colonel Logan, of the famous Massachusetts Fighting Ninth Regiment, now the 101st: "When Colonel Logan arrived in France with the old Ninth Regiment, 80 per cent. of whom are Knights of Columbus, he announced that a public Mass would be celebrated in thanksgiving for their safe arrival overseas, through an ocean where enemy submarines lurked. The Colonel received word that the Mass could not be celebrated in the public square, whereupon he ordered the colors of this regiment to be brought to him, and said in reply to the message he received: 'Anywhere this flag is planted is American soil, and right here in this public square we will celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.' The next day Mass was celebrated in the square, and was attended by our soldiers and by a vast multitude of people."

## BENEDICT XV. AND THE WAR PRISONERS

From the account which is given in the *Osservatore Romano* of the condition of Italian prisoners who have been sent by the Germans to work on railroads in the east, it is evident that there is need for the efforts of the committee which was formed the other day in London to collect information regarding the condition of prisoners in Turkey. The five hundred prisoners whom Mgr. Dolci, the Papal Delegate, saw at the Malatya Camp were at the end of their strength through want of food. Many of them had not even shirts, and those that had had not changed them for several months. The men had found it necessary to sell their clothes to buy bread. To their material privations was added moral suffering, for they were without friends or sympathy, and uncertain of their fate. In the name of the Holy Father, Mgr. Dolci generously came to their relief. He provided for them new clothes, soap, cigarettes, and other comforts, as well as a good meal; heard their confessions, said Mass for them, and gave them Holy Communion. The kindness of the Holy Father's representative has been greatly appreciated, but his resources are, it is needless to say, limited.

Believe me, the great names in literature are rarely those of the men who, with the hands of giants and the hearts of heroes, have gone into the quarries of human thought and hewed and blasted huge boulders from the mass. Rather are they the names of those who took the rough, undressed stones, and shaped and polished them and built them into enduring structures—whether the temple or the palace or the domestic home—places where all generations come to pray or to be guided or to be happy.—Rev. Joseph Farrell.