

NEW ZEALANDERS AT LOURDES

(By "PILGRIM.")

It was the very great privilege of a few New Zealand Catholic soldiers employed at Headquarters, London, to make a pilgrimage to Lourdes at New Year. Interest in the idea was stimulated by the publication in the *Universe* of an account of an English soldiers' pilgrimage from France in September last. The granting of nine days' general leave to Headquarters staff at Christmas or New Year was the first step towards realisation—much more remained to be done, but through the good offices of Chaplain-Father Barra, who interviewed Brigadier-General Richardson, G.O.C. N.Z. troops in United Kingdom, the arranging of the tour was made much easier. For this the general and chaplain deserve the best thanks. The party, which originally comprised ten members, one of whom was a non-Catholic, intended to do the pilgrimage at Christmas. Owing, however, to the difficulty of obtaining passports the journey had to be postponed till New Year, which unfortunately reduced the number to four.

The small party, fully conscious of the great privileges before them, left London on the afternoon of December 28. The cross channel run from Southampton to Le Havre proved rather more disturbing than anticipated. Paris was reached at 1 p.m. next day. The proportions of the fine Cathedral at Rouen were visible as the train passed along. The view of the river Seine here, and its valley, was impressive notwithstanding the wintry conditions. On arrival in Paris it was ascertained that a train was leaving for Lourdes the same evening at 8.30 on which the party embarked. The train passed through the cities of Orleans, and Poitiers, but daylight did not emerge until Bordeaux had been reached next morning. Nothing could be seen of the city—the site of a large American infantry camp lay close to the line. From this point to Pau, where the train arrived at 4 p.m., the country looks very marshy, and contains extensive fir forests. The town of Pau, which marks the junction of the railway line, now winds its way through the mountains, skirting for a considerable distance the banks of the river Gave. The landscape here is similar to that of the Alpine region of New Zealand, and it naturally brought back home memories. The arrival of the train at Lourdes, at 5 p.m., was greeted by a tropical downpour, which was refreshing after the fogs and drizzles of London. Found very comfortable quarters at the Hotel Heims, at reasonable rates. The British Soldiers' Club room attached, which is conducted by Chaplain-Father Nevin, ably assisted by the Misses Lynch and Ryan, is a very cosy place. The hospitality and kindness of these ladies will be long remembered. Father Nevin had just gone away on a short furlough, but the party had the privilege of meeting his *locum tenens* (Father F. Woodlock, S.J.), British Army Chaplain, also Fathers Vander Glintes, and Berges of the U.S. Army.

The religious services of the pilgrimage commenced with a visit to the Grotto of Our Lady on the evening of arrival. The next morning Mass was attended, the celebrant being Father Vander Glintes, then followed a visit to the Grotto, which is the usual practice at the close of each Mass or devotion. The panorama of Lourdes now unfolded itself with the Grotto as the great attractive feature. The holy associations of the spot at once gripped the visitor, whose only desire was to be left to meditate and to feast his eyes on the Sacred Shrine. The constant and fervent devotion of the people was most edifying, especially the practice which appeared prevalent of praying at the Grotto with hands extended. For three days the various religious services were carried out,—attendance at Mass, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the Stations of the Cross, and visits to the Grotto. The beautiful triple church erected near the

Grotto is a great manifestation of devotion to our Lady. Standing in the balustrade, one can imagine the wonderful manifestation of faith when Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is given in the amphitheatre-shaped enclosure at the entrance to the Church of the Rosary, with the invalids ranged round on stretchers during one of the great summer pilgrimages. Much evidence of the cures effected is seen in the many crutches which have been left at the Grotto. The coldness of the spring water did not deter the pilgrims from an immersion therein. Near by the Grotto is the Hill of Calvary, up which winds a mountain road along the route, at suitable intervals, are erected the Stations, the figures, which number from 6 to 13 according to the station, are of bronze and larger than life size. Each station is the gift of some diocese which has sent a pilgrimage. The approach to the first station is by 20 marble steps, which must be scaled on the knees. Owing to the unpropitious weather, and the locking of the gate entrance, the New Zealand pilgrims, much to their disappointment, were unable to do this Sancta Scala.

New Year's Day was fine. A visit to Bernadette's home in the old town was full of interest. The ascent of the mountain Pic de Jer—by the funicular railway provided a magnificent panorama—the valleys with the mountain streams like silver streaks in the afternoon sun winding away through the snow-clad mountains towards the Spanish frontier. On the summit is erected a cross 30 feet high in steel framework which is electrically lighted at night. It is a fine spectacle—an emblem of the simple faith of the people of the Pyrenees. Visits were made to several of the convents, including the Sisters of Nevers, of which Order Bernadette became a member. The time had arrived for departure, and with much regret. On the return journey a short stay in Paris permitted a visit to the Madeleine and Notre Dame, beautiful specimens of ecclesiastical architecture, also to the Churches of St. Gervaise (shelled by the Germans on Good Friday) and St. Augustine and St. Genevieve. The wretched weather was rather a deterrent to sight seeing. The return to London was made on January 7. The visit to Lourdes will be a lasting memory to the pilgrims. It is to be hoped it will be the pioneer of other pilgrimages before the New Zealand troops have been demobilised.

The woman wore a worried look,
Her brow was creased with care,
The chemist's store by storm she took
And hailed a salesman there.
"O Sir," she said, "I'm ill with dread,
My child will die, I'm sure;
With croup he's sick, please serve me quick!
With Wood's Great Peppermint Cure."

BEAUTIFUL HAIR IS THE BEST RESULT OF CARE.

If the hair is neglected it is sure to lose its beauty and luxuriance. All who wish to give proper attention to the hair should consult Mrs. Rolleston, who is a Hair Physician with European and American qualifications. Her advice is sought by ladies all over New Zealand.

The success of Mrs. Rolleston's method of treating falling hair after Influenza has attracted widespread attention. However, Mrs. Rolleston is able to overcome all other hair disorders with the assurance of good results.

Mrs. Rolleston can prescribe excellent treatments for dandruff, for grey and thin hair, or any other scalp ailment from which you may be suffering.

Address—

MRS. ROLLESTON,
DOMINION BUILDINGS, Cathedral Sq., CHRISTCHURCH,
and 256 LAMBTON QUAY, WELLINGTON.—Adv't.