

## SIDELIGHTS ON THE WAR

### GENERAL.

Cardinal Bourne announced at the Irish St. Patrick's Day celebration in the Hotel Cecil that the Admiralty had placed fourteen additional Catholic chaplains in the British Navy.

The French monks of the Benedictine Abbey of Belloc, France, who, on being expelled from France by the French Government, settled in Spain, have now been called up for the war.

In a letter to Cardinal Mercier, thanking him for his Pastoral, the Bishop of Arras writes: 'In certain parts of this diocese, as in Belgium, *nothing* remains of our sanctuaries. What we see is ruin, devastation, misery, death.'

It will be possible to restore Rheims Cathedral, according to M. Guillaume Tronchet, chief architect to the French Government. He says that casts had been taken of nearly all the details of ornamentation that were destroyed, and mathematically precise documents exist from which the Cathedral may be reconstructed in every detail.

One of the Catholic missionaries of Papua, Rev. Father Henri Van Neck, a Belgian M.S.H., has been decorated by his King for his courageous conduct on the battlefield (says the *Catholic Press*). After twelve years of mission work in New Guinea he had gone to his country for a holiday, when war broke out. He at once engaged as chaplain in the Belgian army, and was attached to the 1st Cavalry Division. He is still in service, and intends to come back as soon as the war is finished.

The *Irish Independent* publishes a letter written by an Irish soldier to the Cure at Hinges, a town in France, where the Irish soldiers were evidently treated with friendly hospitality. Mr. Neil Primrose, M.P., who received the letter from the Cure, sent it to Mr. Healy, and it has just been published in the *Independent*. This is the letter:—'My dear Father.—Before leaving your village I beg to thank you and your people for the kindness and courtesy shown to the N.C.O.'s and men of the Royal Munster Fusiliers. In all places we have been treated as if we were in our own land. We, Irish Catholics, feel deeply for this fair land of France and its people, and the heart of the Irish nation is with you in this struggle. May God bring peace and prosperity to you and your people.—M. FITZMAURICE, Sergeant-Major.'

### CATHOLIC OFFICERS KILLED.

Quite a number of Catholic officers have lately fallen on the field of honor in France. At Neuve Chapelle the number of officers killed was exceptional, and Catholics had quite the usual proportion in the casualties. Among other Catholic officers who have lately been killed in battle or died from wounds are Lieut. C. F. Burnand, grandson of Sir Frank Burnand; Lieut. R. A. de Staapole, youngest son of the Duc de Staapole, County Galway (the Lieutenant's elder brother, Lieut. Robert de Staapole, was killed in September last at the battle of the Aisne); Lieut. the Hon. H. C. Stonor, youngest son of Lord Camoys; Lieut. H. M. Hayes-Newington, King's Liverpool Regiment; Lieut. Leonard Charles Wildsmith, an old Oratory and Stonyhurst boy; and Lieut. P. A. O'Brien, Leinster Regiment, who was appointed so lately as December last.

### EFFECTS OF THE WAR.

In Germany, as in France, the war has had good effects. Prior to the conflict many of the Germans held inflated notions of the power of the militarists. They thought that the struggle would be something like the campaign of 1870 against France, but they have been undeceived (says the *Catholic Times*). They are now alarmed at the outlook and much humbler in spirit. The change has been a subject of remark in Lenten Pastorals, and it is dwelt upon by Cardinal von Bet-

tinger, Archbishop of Munich, in a Pastoral Letter which he has just addressed to the German soldiers. 'There was a time,' says his Eminence, 'when unbelief and immorality were openly in evidence. Belief in God and in our Divine Saviour was not merely assailed, but mocked at. The war has, however, produced quite a different state of things. The rays of belief have broken through the clouds. The people are once more assembled before the altars in common prayer and adoration. From unbelief they had nothing consoling or sublime to expect. Its preachers have been brought to shame. The God of mercy has prevented us from going to ruin: He has warned us in time.' Through the war unbelief has been dealt a smashing blow. Religion will enjoy far more general respect in Germany and France when the struggle has come to an end.

### SIENKIEWICZ ON POLAND'S DISTRESS.

All the accounts which come from Poland of the condition to which the people have been reduced tell of misery and desolation. Sienkiewicz, who is president of the general committee for the relief of the Polish victims of the war, paints a pathetic picture of their suffering in an appeal which has been addressed to the civilised world (says the *Catholic Times*). Three-fourths of the towns have suffered through military operations. Some of them, such as Kalich, have been sacked. In several of the most populous industrial cities through which armies have passed there are severe economic crises. Roads have been destroyed, railways torn up, workers are without employment, merchants without business. The vast majority of the urban population are starving and many are dying of hunger. In town and country epidemics—typhus, dysentery, and cholera—are raging. The hospitals are full of wounded, and in a considerable number of them means for treating the patients medically are wanting. Seven millions of the rural population are in poverty and want. The land has been ruined and useful work on it is at present out of the question. It would seem that in their most trying days in the past the Poles never had to endure misfortune and injustice to such an extent. They have had to pay a terrible price for German and Austrian ambition.

### MEDALS, AND WHAT THEY MEAN.

In the Army supreme bravery in either an officer or a soldier is rewarded with the Victoria Cross, and both are entitled to put the letters 'V.C.' after their names. But for what might be called a second-class act of valor the officer gets the Distinguished Service Order (entitling him to place 'D.S.O.' after his name), and the soldier gets the distinguished conduct medal. The initials of the latter do not appear after a soldier-recipient's name, but it brings him a gratuity of £20 on discharge, or, if he prefers it instead, an addition of 6d a day to his pension.

There is, in addition, a silver medal for meritorious service, which may be awarded to any soldier above the rank of corporal who has been selected for an annuity for 'long, valuable, and meritorious service, or who has been mentioned in despatches for valuable and meritorious service during a campaign.' The number of recipients of this decoration is limited by the sum allowed for annuities—namely, £7500 a year; each annuity not to exceed £20. This gives a chance to old and worthy N.C.O.'s who have not had the luck to see active service; and there is a similar provision for officers, the yearly sum in this case being £14,200, which is distributed as rewards for meritorious service in annuities not exceeding £100 each.

In addition, warrant officers, N.C.O.'s, and men may earn a medal for 'long service and good conduct' where they have served not less than eighteen years with an irreproachable character; and this carries with it (except in the case of warrant officers) a gratuity of £5. A special pension of £10 a year is granted at once to every soldier-recipient of the V.C., and an extra £5 a year for each bar added to the Cross for fresh acts of valor—or £50 a year if the hero is destitute.