

Mass at 3 in the morning, but at 6 on the evening before word was brought that they must leave at 1 in the morning. The soldiers, however, did not want to be deprived of Holy Communion, and matters were quickly arranged. So, profiting by the permission of the Pope, the church bell was rung at 8 o'clock in the evening, and the Cuirassiers went to the church and received Holy Communion under the form of Viaticum. Numbers of soldiers say their night prayers in common, and piety shows itself everywhere.

Look at that Communion in the immense hangar at the back of the lines.

It is 5.30 a.m., and in total darkness the men assemble. There is no time for Mass, but the priest had promised them Communion. Rain is sheeting down, wind tears across the water that covers the deep mud in which the men are standing. The candle-lantern of the priest is the only light. The Confiteor is said, and though the men have been told they may remain standing, at the words "Ecce Agnus Dei," down on their knees in the mud and water they fall, before the King of Earth and Heaven. There is no altar—no table—and Christ rests on a clean corporal on a soldier's inverted cap. As each received he left the hangar, and went straight to his duty, making his thanksgiving as he marched or worked. Happiness and fearlessness shone on every face. They are strong now for the fight, and careless of danger, for Christ is with them as He has promised.

His experiences at the front have drawn these words from an army chaplain:—

The cannon is indeed a preacher that converts many who are indifferent. There are many who, sceptics while in garrison, are becoming believers in the fighting line. It is the officers who set the example of piety, and it is in their train that the soldiers come to the minister of God. From a spiritual point of view, this war is the most successful mission that ever was preached. The lesson that is being brought home to me is that the spiritual benefit is worth all the temporal calamities of which we are witnesses.

And a Belgian priest, with his land smoking around him in blood, can write with a heart full of the confidence in God that arises from a knowledge of eternity:—

Europe will be purged of much evil, of disbelief, of indifference, after this fiery trial. There will be a great revival of religion. In the fulness of time it will be seen that all the wrong that man has done will be repaired, and only the good will remain.

The True Solution.

This breadth of vision is to be found in all ranks, as the following incident shows. One poor fellow, who had been careless in times of peace, writing from the firing line to his parents, who were anxious about him, says:—

'Don't worry about me. I am resigned, because I have been to confession. My religious question is, therefore, settled, and I see that it is really from faith that one draws courage and resignation.'

He had been to confession, and 'my religious question is therefore settled.' Here, bluntly put by an honest man, we have the solution of many of the so-called 'religious questions' of to-day—namely, the possession of a clear conscience and a soul that can look to its Creator with perfect confidence.

France at the Feet of Christ.

Thus does France, the eldest daughter of the Church, turn to her Mother in time of danger. For the army to-day is France, and the attitude of the army towards religion is the attitude of France itself. With that army there are 25,000 of the clergy of France, patriots all, whose influence is a mighty leaven for good. As the morning sun rolls back the darkness and lights up the earth, so these sons of heaven have brought the Light of the World to countless hearts, once gloomy with the darkness of sin.

From the highest to the lowliest, all have turned in salute to the thorn-crowned King of Calvary. Officers have thronged the churches and laid their swords on the altars, consecrating their lives to God and

country, and in the field have told their men to put themselves under the protection of God. From Marseilles to Calais, the whole nation kneels in supplication at shrine and altar. 'You simply can't get into Notre Dame des Victoires,' says one writer; 'you have to stay on the square outside and pray there. You feel that everyone is obeying the call of duty, and obeying it generously.'

In the centre of Paris, by the side of the curving Seine, towers the mighty Cathedral of Notre Dame. The correspondent of an English newspaper, speaking of the supplicatory devotions held there, says:—

'Three o'clock was the hour appointed, but for more than an hour before the Cathedral became so densely packed in every part that the great iron gateways had to be closed. People flocked to the church from all parts of the compass, until not less than 20,000 filled the great square outside.'

After describing the procession of holy relics, carried by Cardinal Amette, into the open square, the writer continues:—

'The priest mounted the tribune, and in a loud voice, which carried out over the square, read a litany, to each invocation of which the multitude fervently responded. Altogether, the gathering evoked a remarkable demonstration of religious zeal.'

Of another ceremony in the same Cathedral we read:—

'One seemed to be witnessing a splendid scene of other times, when faith was purer. In the hour of danger France found once more her youthful forces, and took up her ancient virtues as she has taken up arms.'

And so through the length and breadth of the land; but when we get near the trenches the light is fairly blazing. One soldier writes:—

'Nearly 9000 men were at Mass, and it was very consoling to see these men, drawn from all classes, turn to God in our hour of trial and ask of Him help, protection, and victory for our army. We prayed for the repose of the poor fellows who had been lost in the bloody battles of this week.'

Many who had listened to the insidious call of the Mudmen now make public acknowledgment of their error. One officer, once a prominent Rationalist, writes thus to his family:—

'I have just been to Mass. This will probably astonish you, but religion is being restored in this war. I am not the only one who has been won over. . . . When one is face to face with death, as Hervo said in his paper last week, in speaking of the Socialists, "we do not want to die like beasts."'

The Ireland of France.

Those who know Brittany—the Ireland of France—with its cross-road Calvaries and sanctuaries and Catholic atmosphere, will understand the splendid faith that the following, from a dying Breton soldier to his mother, shows:—

'Be sure that my last thought was on God, and for you, and that the last beat of my heart was for God, my country, and you, mother dear. Look up till we see each other again.'

'Look up till we see each other again!' The glorious doctrine of the Communion of Saints! Happy son! Happy mother!

'War is a great mission,' exclaims a priest, in amazement at the number of converted souls. 'All the men ask for the Sacraments as if they were the most pious of Seminarists. It is almost incredible. They no longer know what human respect is: they have become fervently religious. They make their confessions in the streets, on the roadside; they attend service, sing hymns, recite the Rosary. All wear medals, not round their necks or in their pockets, but in their caps or on their tunics.'

(To be continued.)

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