

OUR CATHOLIC CHAPLAINS

FATHER McMENAMIN'S LAST LETTER.

Writing under date May 15 from "somewhere" in France, to his Grace Archbishop O'Shea, Chaplain-Major McMEnamin gave the following interestingly vivid, and—in the light of subsequent sad happenings—pathetic facts relating to military movements and chaplains' doings at the front:—

When last I wrote to your Grace (stated Father McMEnamin), my brigade was out for two weeks' training in preparation for the *Opus Magnum*. We were nearly forty miles away from the firing line, and the short respite from the almost unceasing roar of the guns was a treat for all of us. The weather was delightful, and as officers and men were cosily billeted the fortnight passed pleasantly. The men had, of course, to work hard, but the work being very much in the nature of a rehearsal, was interesting. The four battalions of my brigade were billeted in four different villages, but I was able to get two battalions into one church for Mass, and two into another. I had a four days' mission in each place, and was more than pleased with the result, though this would have been still better had the companies returned from training at the same time each day. A number of the men received Holy Communion at the 6 o'clock Mass each morning, and I think that every man who had an opportunity to attend the mission went to the Sacraments. In each church there was a harmonium in the sanctuary, and the soldiers sang the Benediction and a number of hymns splendidly. I was fortunate enough to get a Jesuit Father from a near-by large town on two evenings. He preached two excellent sermons suitable to the soldiers. I warned our men when out there that they should take advantage of that fine opportunity, as they would get but little chance of church services when they returned to the line. My words proved truer than I even thought. Since our return the men have been working night and day, week days and Sundays. No church parades are called, though we, of course, have Mass for the few who can attend. Half the men go out in the evening and work till daylight, and they must sleep nearly all day to get ready for another night's work. The other half goes out in the early morning. All this applies to the infantry only though their other units are working hard also only in different ways. We are all making a special canvass of the units, company by company, to at least get the confessions heard before the big fight. Unfortunately we are a priest short here. Father Richards has gone to England, and Father Skinner is here. As the Rifle Brigade had been many weeks without a chaplain, I had Father Skinner posted to them as soon as he arrived. Now the 1st Brigade is left without anyone. I applied to Headquarters six weeks ago for Father O'Neill to be sent over quickly. A few days later I received word that Father O'Neill's movement order had been applied for (this must come through the War Office), but since then I have heard nothing. Matters move with incredible slowness in chaplaincy matters. Fathers Doyle and Daly took about six weeks to get to England, where they were urgently needed. The journey can be easily done in 24 hours, but red tape held them up at our base camp in France, though they had nothing whatever to do there. Father Daly, I believe, has not reached England yet. I have complained to the Corps Headquarters, Divisional Headquarters, London headquarters, and finally to the Principal Chaplains' Department in France, as the Headquarters seems to lay the blame for all muddling on to the Principal Chaplains' Department. We are subject to this department, but why we should be so I cannot tell. Bishop Cleary is on the trail of the offenders, and he may do something to get chaplain transfers expedited. The fact remains that we are a man short at the front at this critical time. I am hoping that one may come any day. Fathers Barra and Skinner are very well, and both are showing plenty of energy. Father

Bartley is with the new 4th Brigade in England, and I have recommended that he be left with it and come to France with it. A new brigade, which may go into action immediately on arrival in France, needs a fresh and zealous priest to do the necessary work in the time. Father Bartley, I feel sure, will do it well. Summer has come in all at once. The trees and hedges have quickly put on their coats of green, and everything is lovely—except the war. The Germans have been very rude to us lately. No such shelling has been known in this sector within the memory of the oldest inhabitant. It is nothing short of miraculous how few men were killed, especially eight days ago, when the Huns sent over heavy shells almost without ceasing from 9 p.m. till daylight. I was the only one of our chaplains within the shell area, and I will not soon forget the experience.

I was glad (wrote Father McMEnamin) to read the speech of your Grace on the conscription of priests question. Our Catholic soldiers treated the matter lightly at first, but now our boys are most indignant at the fact that our priests have to beg for exemption.

Father McMEnamin concluded by extending kindest regards to Archbishop Redwood, Archbishop O'Shea, and to all the priests.

Hamilton

(From our own correspondent.)

A very pleasant and successful social evening, under the auspices of the Catholic Men's Club, was held on Tuesday, July 17, in St. Mary's Hall, to wish farewell and make a presentation to Mr. C. D. Hopkins (late secretary of the club), prior to his entry into camp. The Very Rev. Dean Darby and Rev. Father Duffy were present, and there was an attendance of about 120 members and friends. The hall was tastefully decorated for the occasion. A musical programme was contributed to by Messrs. Fox and Lafferty (songs), and F. Edmond (musical monologue). The Very Rev. Dean Darby, in making a presentation consisting of a gold illuminated-face wristlet watch, suitably inscribed, and a safety razor outfit, referred in appreciative terms to the good work done by Mr. Hopkins as secretary of the club, and to the respect in which he was regarded as a citizen. The Very Rev. Dean wished Mr. Hopkins all good fortune in his future undertakings, and a safe return. Mr. W. J. Waters (secretary of the club) expressed on behalf of the members appreciation of the services rendered by Mr. Hopkins in the club, and in Catholic movements generally. He (the speaker), too, wished their departing fellow-clubman every success in his hazardous undertakings, and a safe and speedy return. Mr. Hopkins returned sincere thanks for the gifts, and for the expressions of good-will towards him. He had (he said) deemed it a pleasure, as well as a duty to help on the club, and as a Catholic to do what little he was able in the interests of the Church. He extended his best wishes for the progress and prosperity of the club. Cheers were then given for Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins. Supper was served by the members of the ladies' club, who were very cordially thanked by Mr. Grogan for their thoughtfulness and generosity.

Westport

The Sisters of Mercy of St. Joseph's Convent, Westport (writes a correspondent) are in receipt of the following list of successful results of a midwinter examination in commercial subjects, held in connection with the National Business College, Sydney:—

Elementary Bookkeeping.—Mona Bright, 92; Eileen O'Malley, 89; Grace Donaldson, 83; Kathleen Gray, 90; Aileen Jones, 89; Ronald Clarke, 90; Richard Bright, 87; Frank McGreevy, 90.

Speed Typewriting.—Veronica Bell, 33 words per minute (pass).

Junior Typewriting.—Nellie Sullivan, 87; Grace Donaldson, 90.

Intermediate Bookkeeping.—Eileen Costelloe, 84; Veronica Bell, 92; Ada Pain, 86.

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