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CATHOLIC SOLDIERS

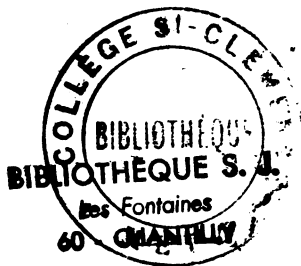
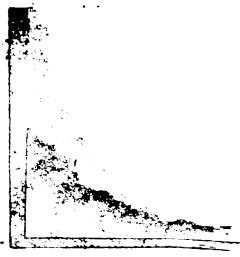
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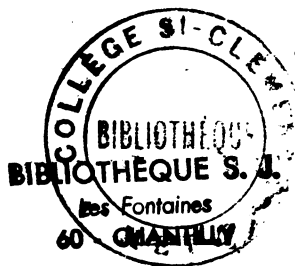
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CATHOLIC SOLDIERS

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BY

SIXTY CHAPLAINS
AND MANY OTHERS

EDITED BY

CHARLES PLATER, S.J.

AUTHOR OF "THE PRIEST AND SOCIAL ACTION"

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PREFACE

How has the religion of Catholic soldiers in the British Empire stood the test of war ?

This book contains some material for an answer to this question. Sixty Catholic chaplains and a large number of officers and men have very kindly written me answers to a set of questions sent to them. Some thousands of letters from Catholic soldiers have also been drawn upon.

My task has been merely to arrange the material sent in, and to supply connecting links, condensing where necessary, and omitting what seemed irrelevant. I have not omitted anything merely because it was unpleasant or disappointing : nor, again, because it was obviously too eulogistic.

But, as this is not a controversial book, I have left out nearly everything (and there was a great deal) in the way of comparison between Catholics and non-Catholics. And when I say Catholic I mean (like all my correspondents) " Roman Catholic."

Every chaplain who has sent in a report is indicated by a number in brackets. *Can.*, *Aus.*, and *N.Z.* before a number mean respectively that the chaplain is a Canadian, an Australian, or a New Zealander. In an Appendix will be found some indication of the nature and length of service of

each chaplain. This will perhaps enable the painstaking reader to weigh the evidence more judicially. Other contributors are indicated by initials. Some evidence from the American Army has been added by way of comparison.

I have to thank all who have sent me in reports : also the Dominican Sisters at Leicester and Mother Loyola at York, for going through incredible quantities of letters from Catholic soldiers, and extracting passages bearing on the subject of this report.

Of course the evidence here collected is not complete. Could it ever be so? But it will be, perhaps, useful and interesting so far as it goes, and it seemed worth while putting on record while memories were fresh. It is a beginning, anyhow : and I shall be glad to receive further evidence from those who are able and willing to supply it.

CHARLES PLATER, S.J.

CAMPION HALL, OXFORD,
October 1919.

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CATHOLIC SOLDIERS

CHAPTER I

THE FAITH OF THE MEN

THE first point to ascertain was whether any large proportion of Catholic men had been unsettled in their religious belief.

Among the questions sent round were these :

“ Has the war created any difficulty for the men's faith? Is their sense of the presence of God increased? Do they value their religion more? ”

On this matter the answers were strikingly unanimous, and, as the point is one of fundamental importance, we quote them at some length. Not one clear case appears in all the reports and letters in which a Catholic soldier has been unsettled in his belief in God by the war. The wondering questions asked at the sight of widespread death and ruin have scarcely amounted to temptations against the faith. The nearest approach to this is found in a letter from a private :

“ I have seen sights out here that have nearly turned me against religion, but of these I couldn't tell you unless you asked me to.” (Dvr. W. S.)

Some chaplains simply say that the faith of the men has been “ strengthened ” (10) ; “ stirred and

confirmed" (2); "if anything, confirmed" (15); "distinctly quickened" (Can. 9).

Others keep to a negative statement. The faith of the men "has not been affected at all" (8); "no bad effect" (Can. 4); "not notably, except transiently and emotionally one way or the other" (Can. 3); "no difficulties intellectually" (24); "very few disturbed in their faith by the war" (Can. 2); "none lost the faith" (Aus. 2); belief in God not affected by the war" (Aus. 3).

The rest of the chaplains write as follows :

"I have not found any cases of Catholic men whose faith has suffered through the discussions on 'God's power and the war,' 'the problem of pain,' etc., which used often to take place amongst their companions in their presence. The Catholic Church has so consistently preached the value of 'cross bearing,' that men were ready to see God-the-Rewarder waiting for his own time to make things right. Poverty, pain, and sickness do not lead to blasphemy and unbelief in the case of even ignorant Catholics. They were less influenced by the puzzling delay of Providence to give success to the cause of justice in the war, and were ready to give God time to work out His plan." (19.)

"Men often used to ask me to explain why it is that God should seem, as it were, to destroy His own work and allow evil to conquer. So many priests were killed, the church was the first place to be hit and destroyed, good Catholics were driven from their homes, never to return again. True, sin is a great offence against God, but was not suffering too awful for words, and more often than not, it was a good fellow who was knocked out in the fight." (8.)

“ It has strengthened the faith of the men. [One sees them] going to confession anywhere, joining in processions, etc., attending Mass, welcoming the priest in the presence of others.” (22.)

“ I never came across any [men who had difficulties about faith] except one man in a venereal hospital, who said he had given up all religion and thought it no good.”¹ (*Ibid.*)

“ Difficulties to faith? None whatever, and Belgian and French peasants have greatly strengthened them.” (17.)

“ I consider that the war has not created any difficulties for the men’s faith, but has removed many prejudices that existed.” (20.)

“ [Our men] are not puzzled as non-Catholics are by God’s allowing war. They understand it is a consequence of sin—of free-will badly used. I have met no man whose faith suffered: many who for the first time appreciate the faith.” (17.)

“ Yes, I think, on the whole, the faith of Catholic soldiers has been increased by the war. Their sense of God’s presence and confidence in Him tend to increase. Men always go into the line more happy after receiving the Sacraments; they will kneel down under heavy shell fire, with splinters falling, take off their helmets, and receive Our Lord as calmly as if in church at home.” (14.)

“ On the whole the war has probably increased the faith . . . of the average Catholic soldier. It has deepened his perception of the spiritual, the immortal, and the eternal.” (2.)

¹ It is not said whether this was in consequence of the war.
—ED.

“ The war is simply the problem of evil and pain magnified ten thousand times, and pressing on the soldier individually in hundreds of different ways : and I am sure the Catholic soldier discovers that his faith—the Incarnation and Passion—was meant precisely to meet his case. His faith becomes a philosophical necessity to him, and he gets deep insight into it from his own experience.” (3.)

“ How is the faith of Catholic soldiers affected by the war? Certainly not disadvantageously. Rather the contrary. I have known no case of any man previously possessed of faith losing the gift in, or because of, the war. It (the war) has, in my belief, thrown many (even an immense proportion) back on to the solid foundations of faith, both in theory and practice. Their sense of the presence and power of God has certainly increased in the life of danger. I cannot give definite instances. But numbers of men (including Protestants) have assured me of the intensity of their prayer in critical circumstances. Such critical circumstances constantly recurring must have tended to the formation of a habit.” (37.)

“ Any difficulties men had about their faith came not from the war as such, but from the talk of their companions, and the difficulties were never great ones.” (23.)

“ I should say that it had not seriously, at least. Of course one heard the commonplace remarks about, how God could permit it to go on, but there was really no loss of faith underlying the question, in the cases that I met.” (27.)

“ I don't think their faith has been affected adversely, but I cannot say I noticed any marked deepening of it.” (29.)

“ I found the men’s faith strengthened by the war ; in some cases it was remarkably apparent. From external signs, the presence of God seemed to grow among them : blasphemy was severely taken in hand by the better men, when hearing the Catholics indulge in it : many of the men liked to speak of God and His providence, when alone with me.” (26.)

“ I cannot remember one case of a man having lost his faith on account of the war.” (41.)

“ Occasionally, but not frequently, men have asked questions, such as, ‘ Why does God permit war with all its horrors ? ’ And over and over again that the Pope is pro-German. They have read it in the papers, so-and-so told them, and so on. The answering of such apparent difficulties generally means that the man gets a clearer reason for the faith that is in him.” (Can. 5.)

“ I do not think the faith of Catholic soldiers has been much affected by the war *directly*. It has no doubt been affected indirectly, inasmuch as their general religious life has been altered for the better or worse.

“ At the present, out of three years’ experience, I can only remember one instance of a Catholic soldier bringing forward the problem of evil difficulty. This was a wounded man in a Base Hospital. He did not wish to receive the Sacraments, and said, as one reason for his objection, that if the Catholic religion were true, God would protect Catholics in a special manner from wounds and death. He gave me the impression of being a man who had led a loose life and neglected his religion for many years. Another man, an infantry man in the line, and an old soldier, refused on the

ground that this killing business was murder, and it was impossible to be a real Catholic and Christian while a soldier on active service. This man was of the same type as the other, a tough sort of fellow, who, I should think, had not practised his religion for many years previous to the war." (28.)

"I do not think that the war has created any difficulties for the men's faith. On the contrary, as regards the officers, there might be some subtler temptations from the tone of 'large mindedness' expressed by non-Catholics in mess, etc. But I cannot positively say that I have seen examples of injury from this cause, though likely such exist." (37.)

"Not much difference. But the Colonial troops came into wider contact with the Church, and realized its extent, and so, on the human side, were more proud to belong to it." (N.Z. 1.)

"I don't think anyone has lost the faith. I never met a case." (N.Z. 2.)

"Actual warfare increases the faith of Catholics. They are pleased to manifest it. They will go to confession in trenches and open places." (Aus. 5.)

Catholic officers and men write of the deepening of their faith due to the war :

CAPT. T. (Tyneside Irish).—"The faith of Catholic soldiers has been intensified."

LIEUT. C.—"I consider that the war has brought men to think of the things that count more deeply and earnestly than in peace time, the obvious reason being the proximity of death."

LIEUT. G.—“The faith of the Catholic soldier was very much strengthened by the war. By the nature of things he was brought face to face with death. . . . As a Catholic he had answers ready for the questions that must have asserted themselves.

“The faith of the Catholic soldier was further increased by the evidence of Catholicism about him. . . . He felt that he was in a Catholic country, and in the back areas and towns his presence at Mass was proof of his feeling ‘at home.’”

SERGT J. A. (K.R.R.).—“Provided that a good Catholic home training has been received, the faith of Catholic soldiers has been strengthened.

“That the average Catholic soldier was conscious of the presence of God was manifest in his usual cleanness of speech and dislike of blasphemy. This was even more noticeable in moments of greater danger when his ejaculations were frequent and a wonderful contrast to the exclamations usually uttered.”

RFLM. R. B. (Leeds Rifles).—“I can honestly say that the nature of work we have been on this last year or two has made us turn more of our time and thoughts to Him that we used to forget.”

PTE. J. C. (East Lancs.).—“I am putting my faith in Almighty God and His Blessed Mother to see me safely through to the bitter end.”

L.-CPL. J. E. D. (Machine Gun School).—“I am the only Catholic boy in this hut. When I go to early Communion, I have to listen to sneers, but I don't mind if I can only love God more, and make myself humble to Him.”

CPL. F. S. (Mesopotamia).—“It is very hard living in this country: so many temptations to contend

with. But I pray to Blessed Mary to intercede for us all to Him who is our Father."

PTE. W. D. (Labour Corps).—"If ever a chap needed God it was on the battle-field. I always tried to lead a good life in France, and with God's help I have won the battle."

PTE. G. O'N (H.A.C.).—"I should say one's faith is deepened, and the sense of the presence and the nearness of God increased. When in danger I often had the feeling that the Holy Family were walking a few yards ahead of me, and any minute I might find myself in their presence."

PTE. C. F. (K.O.Y.L.I.).—"I think the war has given food for thought to many people, and I trust they will find comfort in the mysteries we associate with Christmas, especially those who have lost their near and dear ones."

PTE. R. W. (Signal Service).—"I have seen it more clear than ever that God is our only hope and light, and I never feel happy without Him."

Of the American Catholic soldiers their chaplains write :

"The sense of the presence of God is determined by the attitude of the faithful to their religion who realized the protecting guidance of God, and had therefore an increased appreciation of the love of God for them. This showed itself in many ways, and especially in their frequent visits to the city churches, and their attendance at Sunday vespers and benedictions in these same churches." (F. H.)

"I found that the faith of our Catholic soldiers was increased and intensified by the presence of danger during the war, and by the thought of those whom they had left at home." (F. M.)

A K. of C. secretary writes : " Difficulties to faith ? No, positively."

Another American writes :

"It is my opinion that the faith of our Catholic soldiers in the ranks of the American Army has been strengthened rather than otherwise by their experiences in the war. Many factors have had a part in this result, some with a greater influence, others a lesser, on the life of a particular individual. What these men faced was death, and they knew it ; the end of life on earth and judgment before their Creator was probable at any moment. No man in whom there was a spark of Catholicity could help reflecting on the life beyond, on his status with his God. And I believe that when religion is brought home to the man himself, the effect is more powerful than a hundred sermons. For another thing the average soldier has more time for reflection than he ever had before. He has many solitary hours, and hours passed as a sentry or spent in a trench do not incline our thoughts towards frivolities. He thinks of the past—his home and his loved ones, little incidents of his youth that have not come to his mind for years, and inevitably the cycle turns upon himself, his life, and his God. Of course, after a time the soldier adapts himself to his new environment, the tragedies of battle become a part of his daily life, and he becomes to a degree accustomed to danger. But through it all, I have found, each man invariably works out for himself, and adheres to his own little philosophy of life and death ; with the Catholic soldier, it is his religion. It is not difficult to see then why I hold the view that the man that has gone through the fire does value his religion more. For the time at least he has realized the more serious side of life." (H. M.)

B

FATALISM

The vocabulary of impersonal fatalism is so common in the Army that it was important to know whether Catholic soldiers employed it equally with others: and, if so, whether they gave it a different meaning.

The answers seem to show that although Catholic men frequently use fatalistic terms, they usually attach their own meaning to them.

This comes out clearly in several letters from the men, where such terms as "luck" are evidently used as synonyms for God's will.

The question asked was :

"Is impersonal fatalism to be found among Catholics or a trust in Providence, *e.g.*, 'My name written on the shell' as opposed to 'God's Holy Will'?"

Several chaplains say that they have never met a case of fatalism among Catholic soldiers. Others say that it is not common. One (8) hardly thinks that Catholics are able to distinguish between fatalism and God's will. The others reply as follows :

"The fatalism so common outside the Church, is shared inside in a curious way; almost orthodox. 'If I am to be killed by a shell, that shell has my name on it, but it was God who wrote it, so I am all right.' This is more common among Catholic officers than men. I think it's really 'God's Holy Will' put into modern slang and contemporary thought." (17.)

“In the mouth of a Catholic the two phrases mean much the same thing.” (3.)

“This is a difficult question to answer. ‘God’s Holy Will in all things, *plus* the feeling that if God has numbered our days and finished them, we shall go, and if not we shall come out,’ perhaps best expresses it. I am sure that generally speaking, they do realize that without God nothing whatever can happen, and that whether killed, wounded, or unhurt, it is alike His Will.” (14.)

“I have not found fatalism to any degree amongst men. I have met with very beautiful examples of trust in Christ. ‘He knows what is best for me.’” (12.)

“I think that expressions, apparently fatalistic on their face value, are only used as camouflage for ‘God’s Holy Will.’” (10.)

“I don’t think that impersonal fatalism is common among Catholics. There is, however, fatalism of a kind, which implies a trust in God’s Providence. So many think that there is a special time or moment or circumstance decreed by God, and when that moment comes, one is going to die no matter where he is. Such expressions as ‘If my time has come’ are very common.” (Can. 1.)

“The fatalistic expression ‘My name may be on it,’ was very common, and thoroughly accepted as true, but the men had only a vague notion of what it meant really, and if you pressed them, you found that their fatalism was, after all, Divine and Providential.” (23.)

“Catholics make the same remarks as other men in the same circumstances, but I don’t think it can

be dignified by calling it the expression of fatalism. It's just jargon." (37.)

"I often heard, 'Well, Father, when my turn comes, it is because it must be.' I have seldom heard any explicit reference to God's will, but I think it is often implied." (31.)

"Men have talked to me in this way, but I think it was merely the reflection of this manner of talking among their non-Catholic comrades." (29.)

"I do not think there is any fatalism among our men, and very little among the others in spite of their remarks. I remember many a fervent 'Thank you, Sir,' from non-Catholics in response to my 'God bless and protect you, boys,' when they were going into battle, and I heard afterwards that they said they would never forget my visit and words." (2.)

"'God's Will' is the clear settler of all their 'fates' in the minds of our Catholic men. It comes out again and again in their letters home, in talking over their prospects before going over the top, in speaking of their comrades who were killed, and in every other way. Their attitude is in sharp contrast with the impersonal fatalism of so very many non-Catholics, to whom the question of their own or their comrades' deaths is just as insistent when living under shell fire." (19.)

"I think men don't care to talk about 'God's Providence,' and simply say 'If I have to stop a bullet, I have to.'" (22.)

"Fatalism was almost unknown. One would often hear, 'If God wishes me to stop one, then I'll stop one.' I never heard fatalism as such discussed freely: there were few examples." (26.)

“ Superficially, fatalism would appear to be prevalent, but this is due to the common way of speaking of danger. Some letters and some talks convince me that at the bottom Catholics trust in Providence.” (Can. 6.)

“ Our Catholic men were indifferent to danger, but were not at all fatalists. Their belief in the Providence of God is astounding.” (Aus. 2.)

“ Our men use catch-words like ‘ my number written on the shell,’ : someone else has said it, and it has caught on.” (Aus. 3.)

“ I’d call it ‘ Christian Fatalism ’ :—‘ The Lord knows when I am going to get knocked out.’ The boys do not doubt God’s Providence.” (Aus. 4.)

PTE. E. B. (Tank Corps, France).—“ A shell got us in a direct hit, and immediately all our ‘ bus ’ was a flaming furnace. . . . Well, once more has God spared me. I owe so much to him already, my only hope is I can try and repay Him by prayer. This morning I went to Mass and Communion.”

DVR. W. S. (A.S.C.).—“ My life is very lonely now my wife is dead, but it is as God wills.”

PTE. V. T.—“ I have been overseas, and have returned safely, which I believe was due to my prayers, which I often said whilst overseas.”

PTE. J. W. (Scots Guards).—“ I came out to France at the beginning of the war, and have been here since, never wounded, so I think I am lucky, or God wills it so.”

PTE J. S. (Leinsters).—“ I am certain that God must have seen good to answer the prayers offered to Him for their [his two brothers] safety. Well,

I hope I shall be as lucky as my brothers, who trust in the same faith."

PTE. P. (H.L.I.).—"I have been very lucky indeed, but I know the reason of it—God was with me even going over the top."

[In the last three quotations it will be noticed how "luck" is equated with "God's will."]

RFM. B. (Liverpool Rifles).—"It was only prayers that saved both my life and my friends. . . . We used to get our prayer books out to pray every minute we had to spare; we also said the rosary as often as we could, so Our Lord saved our lives and watched over us."

A BATMAN.—"Impersonal fatalism in its full sense does not exist. I have certainly heard some say, 'I am a fatalist,' but in his heart he knows it is not the case. His former upbringing in the faith and the reminders given him in sermons will not allow him to think that, and on the whole, the Catholic knows that it is God's Will."

A BATMAN.—"Yes! I think on the whole that God's presence is sensed more than before. One instance is vividly to mind, and that was during a rather heavy bombardment of our lines. A comrade of mine was standing on post in rather a hot corner. Suddenly, there came one of those messengers of death, commonly known as 'whizz bangs,' and killed or maimed four others quite close to us. My chum was heard remarking, 'That was a near thing, but evidently my turn is not due yet,' at the same time crossing himself."

PTE. G. O'N. (H.A.C.).—"I was hit twice by shrapnel, and I believe that 'my name was on the

piece of shell ' that hit me, but I believe God put my name on that piece of shell. To deliberately put my head up in the firing line would be suicide, but to be hit in battle would have been my end known to the Almighty before time began. We had difficulty in explaining this to the non-Catholics, but it was always quite clear to us."

American chaplains write :

" Fatalistic phrases that were common and even popular with most of the men, were often used by the Catholics, but I am quite sure were not mentally assented to by them." (F. H.)

" There is always a great deal of ' fatalism ' in the average soldier ; but there is much less in the Catholic." (F. M.)

Another American :

" There was probably no serious subject which produced more discussion, when groups of soldiers gathered together in their leisure than fatalism, in its various forms and ramifications. Seldom perhaps did it receive this exact nomenclature, but whether or not these theories found an exact expression, they generally came into being in one form or another as the soldier-mind contemplated the riddle of the future. In fact I have found the fatalistic attitude pretty general throughout all ranks. In mode of expression there was a wide variance, but an average soldier would say : ' Well, if they are going to get me, they are going to get me ; it won't make any difference whether I am on this side of the hill or the other ; when my time comes, I'll get mine ; you can't buck the inevitable, so why worry ? ' "

“Such symbolic formula as ‘My name is written on the shell,’ being the product of a more vivid imagination, were less common. Now, with regard to the average Catholic’s view, in this respect there was often this difference. The Catholic soldier was inclined to be more of a gambler than a fatalist. He figured that in the business of shells, he was taking a gambler’s chance. A certain number of shells might be dropping into his particular woods ; one unsheltered place was as safe as another, there was nothing to be gained by shifting around ; but there was a fair chance that his particular square of the checkboard would be a lucky one, so he awaited the outcome. This view can perhaps scarcely be looked upon as especially edifying, but I found it in fact a general state of mind. It must be remembered too that the soldier, not being an advanced philosopher, would not be likely to push these theories to their ultimate consequences, so as to be involved in difficulties. This much, however, must be said in justice, that the Catholic lad generally recognized frankly that the chances of his meeting death were great, and sought to prepare himself for it. From this preparation and the Sacraments, he drew a comfort that others knew not of, and he went into battle with a precious faith and serenity of mind that enabled him to manfully meet disaster.” (H. M.)

SUPERSTITION

The carrying of medals, rosaries, and the like, has become very general in the Army, and is by no means confined to Catholics.

The question was therefore asked :

“ To what extent do Catholic soldiers rely on such aids to devotion as rosaries, scapulars, and badges? How do they regard them? Are they used as ‘ charms ’ or in a Catholic sense? ”

It is probable that many Catholic soldiers are content to carry their rosaries about with them, seldom or never “ saying ” them. And no doubt the “ souvenir ” or “ keepsake ” idea often comes in. Yet seldom, if ever, is the rosary regarded, even by an ill-instructed Catholic, merely as a charm or mascot. It is certainly looked upon as “ protective,” but this through the intercession of the Mother of God in whose honour the rosary is carried. Moreover, it has the blessing of the Church. To some extent rosaries, etc., are also worn as a badge of Catholicism, though they are ceasing to become distinctive.

The answers of the chaplains are as follows :

“ I don't think that the Catholic soldier has manifested any *superstitious* dependence on his many badges and medals. They were to him bits of his ‘ spiritual uniform,’ and he seemed to feel that God and Our Blessed Lady kept a special protection over him, because of this uniform. It did not give him an assurance that he was safe from shells, but it was for him a continued, unconscious prayer for safety : and if he was to ‘ be taken ’ (not ‘ go West ’), he was comforted to think that his soul would leave a body that bore on it the badge of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady's medal and scapular.” (19.)

“ Not as charms, but in a Catholic sense, and very much indeed.” (22.)

“ The men are always glad to receive prayer books and rosaries—nearly half of them seem to have them already. I do not think that the men use their medals, rosaries, etc., as charms, but look upon them as means of protection in the Catholic sense.” (20.)

“ The men were exceedingly glad to get rosaries and scapulars, and badges, but they did not seem to care about making any external show of such things, e.g. Sacred Heart buttons. They do not regard rosaries, etc., as charms, but have a very solid idea of their proper use.” (23.)

“ Men, like boys, like anything they can get. You can't load them up with too many scapulars, crucifixes, medals, etc. I have never met any case where there was the least suspicion of their being used as charms. They laugh at charms. Too many people with charms get killed.” (17.)

“ I have never met a *Catholic* soldier who looks on rosaries, medals, etc., as a charm. Even where there is very dense ignorance, they cling to these things out of a great love for them, born of their early associations with a mother or sister, or childhood use of them. *The* general reason is that they have been *blessed* by the priest. It is touching to see how they will instinctively step back a pace, uncover and bless themselves when the priest steps aside on the road to bless a beads or medal for them.” (7.)

“ They are very glad to get them always, and show great eagerness at distribution of such things. I suppose uninstructed soldiers regard them more or less as charms. Many send them home as souvenirs, however. Some Protestants wear

rosaries round their necks, and many Catholics do the same." (3.)

"Catholic soldiers are exceedingly fond of rosaries, scapulars, etc. They like to display them as evidence of their religion. In some cases men who abstained from the Sacraments tried to salve their consciences by keeping in stock a plentiful supply of religious accessories." (13.)

"In Catholic sense. The sacramentals¹ have been of great importance." (Can. 2.)

"Rosaries, scapulars, and Sacred Heart badges were in constant demand among Catholics, and frequently asked for by non-Catholics. The Sacred Heart badge was the great favourite among the latter. These were used as emblems of Him under whose protection they placed themselves. The men with pagan inclinations carried charms, mascots, etc." (Can. 4.)

"Practically every soldier carries his rosary. It is looked upon as an aid to prayer. A great many are almost superstitiously devoted to badges, medals, etc. I would not say that Catholics regard them as charms, yet I am inclined to think that they have a hazy idea of their true significance. It is not rare to meet a careless soldier who neglects the Sacraments and Mass, but clings to his badge or medal as a sure protection against ills and dangers. This is more evident on the continent. . . . Many are not able to distinguish between sacramentals and Sacraments." (Can. 1.)

¹ *I.e.*, not the Sacraments, but holy objects, prayers, and rites devoutly used among Catholics.

“ There is no doubt that their appreciation and sense of the supernatural has increased. The value put on rosaries, medals, badges, and relics means this and nothing else. I have seen the Catholics of many a company of infantry and many a battery look up at a crucifix or a wayside shrine with more than interested curiosity on their way towards the line. Several have adopted the French custom of making the sign of the Cross when passing such.” (1.)

“ There is the charm sense, I take it, in most of the uses of scapulars by all ill-instructed Catholics. It is probably more accentuated in the case of the soldier, because of his circumstances, but, at the same time, he is not foolishly trusting to the badge or the scapular for bodily safety.” (27.)

“ They are all very fond of scapulars, etc. They are never used exactly as charms, but the use tends towards superstition.” (31.)

“ It is not my experience that they look upon such things as charms, but rather because of their connection with God, even if they don't make much explicit use of them.” (29.)

“ They had rosaries, etc., in the spirit of faith ; I never noticed the ‘ charm ’ idea, except among Protestants. They were always ready for medals ; it was a bad policy to give a few out and to omit the rest ; one soon heard about it.” (26.)

“ Very keen to get all aids to devotion—rosaries especially. Never experienced any evidence of their being used as charms—by Catholics.” (36.)

“ The men are very keen on rosaries, scapular-medals, and badges. They are proud of them and

not at all ashamed of being seen with them. I don't think they look upon them as charms or mascots." (Aus. 2.)

" They simply regard them in a Catholic sense, and expect some divine assistance when wearing them. I know one staff-officer who always carried a statue of St Joseph in his pocket." (Aus. 3.)

" Whenever there is a distribution of beads, the boys are at them. They look upon them as religious protection, not as charms." (Aus. 4.)

" Catholic soldiers, without exception, like to have their rosaries (which they keep round their necks), crucifixes, badges, etc. They show the greatest respect towards these objects of piety, and have taught their non-Catholic comrades to do likewise. Catholics do *not* regard them as charms. They use them as aids to devotion ; also as a badge that they are Catholics. In the wards and in the hospitals they often display them, and it is remarkable how fervently they will say their rosaries when suffering pain or when death draws near. I have found too that one of the first devotions that converts desire to practise is the rosary." (24.)

" There is no doubt that Catholic soldiers are always very glad to be given rosaries and medals. Men who will never go to the Sacraments will come up to receive rosaries. In some cases there must be a vague hope that the rosary will protect them from being hit ; in others the hope that it will bring them a special blessing from God (the same thing regarded in another light, that of faith) ; others feel that as Catholics they ought to wear them. Some like to wear them as a means of showing their religion, in case they get wounded or killed. While

a fair proportion, say 10 per cent., like to have the rosary to use at Mass and Benediction." (28.)

Ten other chaplains simply say that rosaries and medals are much used, and always in a Catholic sense.

SGT. J. A. (K.R.R.).—"Almost every Catholic soldier possessed at least a rosary. The majority wore scapulars or blessed medals. These were carefully treasured, and I have seen Catholic soldiers quietly saying a decade of the rosary while awaiting 'zero hour.'"

CAPTAIN T. L.—"[Catholics use rosaries] a good deal, I should say, but not as 'charms.'"

PTE. R.—"A rosary and a badge of the Sacred Heart are always part of his kit, and he regards them as his weapons against all danger and harm in the true Catholic sense."

LIEUT. F.—"The men look on medals, etc., in the real Catholic sense, I think."

LIEUT. C.—"I have never met a Catholic soldier who used rosaries, etc., as 'charms.' Many, however, carry them in their pockets, and seldom look at them, being contented with the sense of having in their possession a blessed article."

CPL. B. (York Regt.).—"I have got my rosary beads at hand, and I have also begun the rosary along with you, and I have only missed saying it once, but that was not through my own fault, but I have made up for that since."

PTE. H. W. (Labour Coy.).—"I always carry my beads with me, and I am glad of the reminder that the month of October is devoted to the rosary."

REFLN. D. W. Y. (West Yorks.).—"I am sorry to tell you that the beads I possess are broken, and I have to carry them about in a tin box, but I still love them, that is the chief thing."

SIGN. J. E. W. (Cheshire).—"I am sorry to say that I have lost my rosary in France, but I shall soon have another, as I think it is the duty of every Catholic soldier to carry one."

Any number of men, in their letters, ask for a rosary.

American Army :

"Many of the Catholics had Sacred Heart badges and medallions sewed into their tunics and shirts. Two officers of my regiment, who were Masons, showed me Catholic medals that they carried about their persons, these medals having been given them by Catholic friends or relatives. The men always gladly received rosaries and scapulars, but the only ones whom I might accuse of regarding them as 'charms' were the Mexicans, who, although not fully understanding the correct usage of these articles, were quite bedecked with them." (F. M. H.)

"Our Catholic soldiers, or the chaplains for them, are continually writing to us for rosaries, scapulars, badges, prayer books, etc., using them of course as Catholics." (F. M.)

"Nearly every Catholic soldier has his beads and his scapulars, and when in hospital proudly shows them to the priest. A few weeks ago, I bought about two dozen pairs of beads and the same number of prayer-books to the hospital, and placed them on a table in the room where I said Mass. All were

taken, and I was asked for more. They are in no way looked upon as charms, but as helps against temptation by their use." (F. H.)

"I have found that when Catholic soldiers possessed rosaries, scapulars, badges, etc., they preserved and treasured them with the greatest care, and that they regarded them in the true Catholic sense. More than a few of our lads died on the battlefield clasping the blessed crucifix. (H. M.)

CHAPTER II

RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

“ROUGHLY, what proportion of men are fairly well instructed in their religion ? ”

This question was obviously not easy to answer, the difficulty being to find a common standard. We shall therefore expect to find a wider diversity of expression here than in the last chapter.

The figures must be taken for what they are worth : their variations are explained partly by the chaplain's idea of what is meant by “fairly well instructed,” partly by the nationality of his men. Some of them helpfully distinguish between Catholics of different nations or districts : others, also helpfully, tell us the sort of things that most Catholic men do actually know.

It may safely be said that, as far as this evidence goes, the majority of Catholic men may be said to be “fairly well instructed in their religion.” This is rightly ascribed by several chaplains to the care with which religion is taught in Catholic schools. But stress is laid upon the need of more thorough religious education for Catholic adults.

“Roughly, about 80 per cent. are fairly well instructed. Of the remainder, some are really Protestants who have registered R.C. for sentimental

or practical reasons (such as avoiding church parades; but this chiefly applies to old regular soldiers), some are baptized Catholics who registered as C. of E. (the real number of these can only be guessed at), and some are R.C.s whose only point of explicit faith is that they are R.C. It is a fact that the number of Catholics who know nothing whatever of their religion, and have never been to the Sacraments, is very large. . . .

“The war has proved the enormous value of Catholic elementary schools, and has shown their chief weakness, religion not made spontaneous enough, too much a part of school discipline. In a religious sense, crowds of our men have never grown up at all,—their religious ideas, their prayers, and their ideas of sin remain just as they were at, say, thirteen years old.” (3.)

“I am very much surprised at the crass ignorance of many Catholics regarding their religion, and really do not know where to fix the blame. Our method of teaching Catechism must be at fault, as not more than 50 per cent. of the men are fairly well instructed.” (Can. 4.)

“The great majority of Canadians fairly well instructed. They know the meaning of Mass and the Sacraments; how to go to Confession, etc. In the eastern provinces, certainly 80 per cent. have a good working knowledge of their religion. In the west they are hazier and more indifferent—perhaps a third of them not sufficiently instructed.” (Can. 9.)

“I think that a very large proportion of our Catholic men are ill instructed in their faith. This applies particularly to Englishmen from large industrial centres. The difference between the

Catholics of an Irish battalion and an English one is startling. As a rule the former come to Confession, and know how to make it, the latter have to be hunted up, and if, after much pressure, they do consent to make a confession, they have to be helped considerably. Naturally there are exceptions." (13.)

"I should say roughly that 95 per cent. in the north of England are fairly well instructed.

"In the south of England, perhaps 70 per cent.

"In Ireland practically everyone.

"In Scotland, fully 90 per cent.

"In Australia, 30-40 per cent.

"In Canada, French, 95 per cent.

"In Canada, English, 40-50 per cent.

"In New Zealand, fully 80 per cent." (24.)

"The great majority of Catholic soldiers, in my experience, are well instructed in their religion: that is to say, they know their duties, and can make their confessions with very little help.

"I have been told, however, by priests who have had to deal with battalions of young soldiers (under 18½) that they found many of these unable to say even the commonest prayers." (28.)

"The men were surprisingly well instructed, as was shown by the way they made their confessions, and also by the quick way they understood about the conditions for general absolution, etc. A few individual cases showed lack of instruction, due to the conditions in which the men had lived." (N.Z. I.)

"Not more than 1 per cent. were really ignorant of their religion. This good result is due to the religious education in New Zealand, and the

number of religious houses, especially convent schools." (N.Z. 2.)

"The proportion of well-instructed is much the same as one would find in England. But the point to emphasize is that there is all the difference in the world between the Catholic soldier who, as a lad, attended a Catholic school, and one who didn't. Even if the former has been negligent for years, when he does come to make his confession, it is workmanlike and thoroughly good: the latter, often enough, scarcely knows how to make a confession, and scarcely knows what is a sin or what is not. Nothing seems to compensate for the loss of a thorough grounding in the faith in childhood." (16.)

"I tremble in the face of figures. All Catholic soldiers, except some late-in-life converts, are so well grounded that they pick it all up again after one confession or talk with a priest.

"99 out of 100 Irish would explain correctly Immaculate Conception, difference between Resurrection and Ascension, who was Pontius Pilate, how do you baptize,—in fact anything. The English often don't know these things, or say they don't, not being sure. I except Lancashire men, who equal Irish in all respects, and exceed them in Apostolic zeal. Lancs are always bringing up lapsed Catholics or try to convert Protestants. Lancashire men have no shame." (17.)

"The greatest consolation I have had is to find our men so well instructed in their religion. They generally know all the essentials, how to hear Mass, go to the Sacraments, pray, etc.; and I take this to be a great tribute to our Catholic schools, and

a reward for our labour and sacrifices in erecting, maintaining and defending them." (2.)

"The proportion of men fairly well instructed is very large indeed. Probably only five per cent. are really ignorant. These are usually cases which are the result of mixed marriages or else they represent persons who were too distant to attend Catholic schools." (37.)

There are, of course, a certain number of Catholics who, for various reasons, have grown up entirely without instruction.

"One bitterly cold morning on the La Basse front I was saying Mass for four boys on a week-day, as they were to get back to the trenches next day. Before vesting, I asked them if they would wish to come to Confession so as to have Communion during Mass. Three of them simply nodded their assent, the fourth stood up and with the greatest simplicity said he would like to confess but had never done so yet. I took him to the sacristy and after a few enquiries and a little instruction, I heard his first confession. This is one of three or four instances." (7.)

"(In nine months at a stationary hospital) I have baptized seven who were nominally Catholic, and heard thirteen first confessions (aged 30, 24, 19, 35, 20, 28, 23, 22, 20, 26, 25, 26, 20), and three second confessions (aged 28, 28, 26)." (20.)

"I have come across several Catholics who though baptized, were entirely ignorant of their religion. Some of these were Australians from the bush who had never had a chance of learning it. They seemed entirely different from 'slack' Catholics who have allowed themselves to forget

what they once learnt, and in some cases they showed a wonderful purity of soul and receptivity to truth. Some of the purest, gentlest and most spiritual souls I have met were those uninstructed Australians from the backwoods." (34.)

Other chaplains give the proportion of Catholic men "fairly well instructed in their religion" as follows :

"75 per cent. and more : I feel tempted to say 99 per cent." (22.)

"About 95 per cent." (26.)

"90 per cent." (41.)

"About 80 per cent." (9.)

"About three quarters." (10.)

"About 70 per cent. : about 15 per cent. know very little indeed." (36.)

"Roughly about 65 per cent." (20.)

"The biggest number." (5.)

"Most." (18.)

"About one third." (31.)

"A small minority." (29.)

"80 per cent. in E. Canada : 66 per cent. in W." (Can. 5.)

"75 per cent. to 90 per cent." (Can. 6.)

"One third." (Can. 3.)

"50 per cent." (Can. 8.)

"85 per cent. from cities : less from the bush." (Aus. 1.)

"Only about 5 per cent. are really ignorant."
(Aus. 2.)

"85 per cent. of those who have been at Catholic schools, particularly in cities. 70 per cent. of those in the bush." (Aus. 3.)

"95 per cent. of my brigade fairly well instructed." (Aus. 4.)

"About 80 per cent." (Aus. 5.)

CAPT. T. L. (Scots Guards).—"80 per cent., perhaps, are fairly well instructed in their religion."

A number of Catholic soldiers write for books about their religion because they say they are feeling rusty.

An American chaplain writes :

"Being with a Texas regiment, I had a number of Mexicans of American birth under my charge. Although they were all baptized, they were practically the only ones poorly instructed—and in many cases not at all. (F. M. H.)

Another :

"Nearly all the American soldiers are fairly instructed in their religion." (F. M.)

This is confirmed by the testimony of several of our own chaplains who have ministered to American troops.

An American K. of C. Secretary puts the proportion of well-instructed American soldiers at two-thirds or three-fifths.

CHAPTER III

RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

“ ROUGHLY, what proportion of men practise their religion, *e.g.* praying daily ‘ on their own ’ and coming occasionally to the Sacraments ? ”

We gather from the evidence of the chaplains that the majority of Catholic soldiers say *some* prayers daily : some night and morning, others only at night.

One chaplain puts the number of those who pray daily “ on their own ” at “ about three-quarters.” (10.) Another at “ two-thirds, or perhaps more.” (31.) According to a third “ most say morning and night prayers.” (18.) The only Canadian chaplain who commits himself to figures also says “ two-thirds.” (Can. 3.) Two Australian chaplains give 70 per cent. (Aus. 2 and 3.)

The lowest estimate gives 50 per cent. as saying night prayers (3). The most optimistic is that of an experienced chaplain (17) who declares that

“ All Catholics who practise the minimum and who are morally bad say night prayers, and most morning as well.”

What proportion of the men come occasionally to the Sacraments ? According to most chaplains,

certainly more than half. In hospitals the proportion will naturally be higher. The following are some of the estimates from chaplains in various fields of work :

Occasional reception of the Sacraments.

“ 50 per cent. in a battalion weekly : rest two or three times a year.” (17.)

“ Three-quarters.” (10.)

“ 70 per cent. to 80 per cent.” (36.)

“ Probably not half.” (31.)

“ One-third fervent Catholics : one-third at least Easter duties : one-third slackers.” (32.)

“ 90 per cent.” (Can. 4.)

“ Two-thirds.” (Can. 3.)

“ 50 per cent. to 60 per cent. fairly regular.” (Can. 6.)

“ 50 per cent.” (Can. 8.)

“ [In hospital] practically all : only one or two out of thousands have refused.” (Aus. 1.)

“ Only about 50 per cent. if not beaten up.” (Aus. 2.)

Easter reception of Sacraments.

“ 70 per cent.” (24.)

“ 60 per cent.” (20.)

“ Good majority.” (29.)

“ 75 per cent.” (Aus. 4.)

Several chaplains make the point that there was a better religious spirit among Catholic soldiers

in the earlier part of the war than in the latter. Thus a hospital chaplain in England writes :

“ I found a very great difference in the men in the first eighteen months of the war and after. In that first period the Catholics were in the proportion of 1 to 4 and were all anxious to receive whatever benefits they could from the Church. In the latter part the men were mainly conscripts and *many* Catholics seemed to be indifferent, and the proportion of Catholics was 1 to 15 or 16.” (39.)

This decrease of fervour as the war went on may, as this chaplain suggests, be due to some extent to the diminution in the proportion of Catholics in the army. At the very beginning of the war one saw the Catholic parishes quickly denuded of all their men : and the official figures showed that, in proportion, the Catholic Church had more men in the army than any other religious body. As a chaplain with a fighting division writes :

“ The number of Catholics seemed to dwindle during the latter part of the war—no doubt, I should say, because the stock was getting used up. It seems to prove that Catholics came forward readily in the early days.” (26.)

Where Catholics are few and scattered they are apt to be less keen on the practice of their religion, partly, no doubt, because they cannot be looked after so well by the chaplain (if they have one) and partly because they lack the backing of public opinion. More initiative is required of them. True, “ when they are good, they are very, very good,” but the proportion of slackers increases.

Other chaplains answer as follows :

“ In 1914 and the first six months of 1915 I was at a large reinforcement camp from which drafts were sent direct to the firing line. The men were keenly anxious to see the priest and get to confession.

“ I was in a similar sort of camp later dealing with men who had been up the line and were resting. I found no such keenness amongst them : they looked on their turn in the trenches in just the same sort of way they would look upon going to the mill, or their ordinary work at home. The faith was all right in both cases, but in the latter case they seemed to rely on the priests at the front, or else were prepared to take the risk. At the beginning of the war I have seen men and N.C. officers on their knees on the station platform, waiting for absolution. The same sort of thing may exist now (1918) but I doubt it. The men are more familiar with the danger—are constitutionally very hopeful that they will not be wounded, and so do not take the trouble to get to confession. If they were frightened they would go to see the priest. The war has not affected the faith of Catholics, but danger makes them give evidence of the faith that is in them.” (12.)

“ What rather startles me is that such a goodly proportion had not been to the Sacraments for a long time—two years, four, or more—till they came here.

“ Then, again, I have found myself, and have had the experience of many other chaplains, that rarely did a Catholic soldier before going up the line, if he had missed the Confessions and Mass arranged the morning before, ever seek out a priest for confession though he had mortal sins on his

soul, yet seemed always glad to go to confession if the priest came across him and asked him. A curious phenomenon." (21.)

"About 80 per cent. of instructed Catholics come occasionally to the Sacraments if they have opportunities (if you count *sub divo*¹ confessions you can say 99 per cent.). About 60 per cent. are careless about Sunday Mass when it involves an effort." (3.)

"Many men do pray daily on their own, but are slow to go to the Sacraments." (8.)

"A high percentage [practise their religion], but your question is not easy to answer. I have gone to a battery and given Communion to 12 out of 13. I have gone to a reinforcement camp and could only get 8 out of 30. I think some had been to their duties just before they returned from home. I have no doubt that I had more confessions, etc., when bombs and shells were knocking about than at other times." (22.)

"[At the Catholic Club at A.] during certain periods our weekly average of Holy Communions was 2000." (13.)

"I find the work out of the hospital, *i.e.* among the troops in the neighbouring villages, depressing and discouraging when one considers the result of one's labours. Away from the line I think that religious fervour is not at all what people at home imagine. Few attend Mass or go to the Sacraments. I have found very few of the men who make private visits to the Blessed Sacrament when they could quite easily do so.

¹ In the open air.

"The English *out of the line* I have found a slack and disappointing lot. The better part of them have been those of Irish extraction." (20.)

"I remember giving Holy Communion one morning in a village Church to 900 men of the Connaught Rangers. The curé helped me with tears streaming down his cheeks. At the end he said :

"'Those strong men have all the faces of children as they kneel to receive their Lord in Holy Communion.'" (19.)

"There was certainly an eagerness to have Mass said and to receive Holy Communion especially when in the line. There was perhaps less zeal when lying a bit back, 'in support,' but this may be partly accounted for by the general desire then to be let alone, with absolutely nothing to do except to lie around and to feel glad to be alive. Their appreciation of the Last Sacraments was very lively and on one or two occasions I have heard men say that it was worth while to be a Catholic to have the chance of getting them. Again, I have, when standing at the operating table, seen how glad the men were by my presence when about to go under the knife." (27.)

"Roughly, I should say that 60 per cent. of our men are trying to lead a supernatural life.

"Perhaps 20 per cent. are in the state of having 'given up,' at least temporarily. 15 per cent. have given up the practice of their religion, but nearly all can be brought back. 5 per cent. have lost their faith entirely." (24.)

"The dearth of priests caused a certain amount of slackness which could be cured by a couple

of visits personally. They grew accustomed, at times, to miss Mass, and would plead the war by the way of excuse. Utter weariness and general 'fed-up-ness' was accountable for some back-sliding; the prevalent vice, especially flagrant where an army is, tended to increase the difficulties of men who were not expecting it." (26.)

"The men scarcely ever ask for the Sacraments. They seldom or never refuse them. They are seldom very anxious to have them: they leave the matter to the priest. 'If you like.' They take them for granted." (31.)

"I have only met one man in my whole experience who insisted in deferring the Sacraments till his return to England." (41.)

"The majority practised their religion, praying at least every night; they attended week-day rosary pretty well, and that despite counter-attractions. As regards the Sacraments, about 15 per cent. would go quite regularly, 50 per cent. occasionally; the others required poking up. They seemed to funk confession. They would allow six months to pass and then fail to screw their courage up. Of course most of them came from county districts of Wales where priests are few. Those who were from big towns were more amenable. They are very exacting of the priest, and are not slow in pointing out the fact, if they haven't had Mass that Sunday owing to their being on special duties. They expect the priest to come and chat with them and take it a grievance if overlooked." (26.)

"Personally, any great religious fervour amongst the men never came my way. They needed

constant looking up abroad, just as they did at home. Still, the vast majority of negligent Catholics appear to have returned to their duties and kept it up fairly well during the war. I did not find *much* difference between men in the line and behind, as far as religion was concerned. Of course a few days under fire does get many to their duties when other means have failed. . . . [Of men who went to the Sacraments occasionally], in a unit with a good religious spirit, generally infused by officers or N.C.O.s, the proportion will be between 90 per cent. and 100 per cent. I had very wide experience of visiting different units, batteries, companies, etc., and found that there was a considerable variety in the religious tone of Catholics. This could not be explained by the locality from which they came, as they were generally recruited from the same district." (36.)

" They willingly avail themselves of the help of priests and Sacraments if these helps are brought easily within their reach. The army system, however, does not help, and rather impedes initiative. This is shown in the matter of religion, as in all other matters." (37.)

" During war-time the vast majority, *i.e.* practically all save those who had quite or almost lost the faith through pre-war negligence, eagerly availed themselves of the privilege of General Absolution and non-fasting Communion: that is, nearly all who attended Mass also received Holy Communion.

" Since the armistice, there are some who come regularly to the Sacraments, attend Benediction, perhaps daily, etc. These are just those who would do the same at home." (16.)

“ Field Artillery gunners, who in the late years of the war, were in continual peril from German counter-battery work, were always particularly pleased to see the priest, and were very easy to induce to Confession and Communion; this was more marked with them even than in the infantry. . . . The majority, unless strongly urged, don't come *often* to confession, the real reason being shyness, shame, ignorance, forgetfulness of method of going, fear of reproof, and long absence, but they were eager for Absolution all the same, for almost every man would come to Holy Communion after a General Absolution. They were, however, very amenable to 'Easter Duties.' Before going into line of action, more would come to Confession than usual, and were genuinely contrite: others were not moved, but they were none the less very glad to know that a priest was not far away, and if you met them wounded in the dressing station they would always make themselves known.”
(23.)

“ Catholic soldiers are undoubtedly glad to receive the Sacraments before going into unusual danger, *e.g.* before going into the line for an attack. The great majority will receive non-fasting Communion in such circumstances, and will also make their confessions if there is time. They are also very glad to see the priest when in a bad part of the line, and some will usually come up to him of their own accord in such a case and ask for absolution.

“ . . . In general, religion flourishes more in the line than further back. It is easier to get infantrymen to their duties than transport men or R.A.M.C. in units behind the line. It must be remembered, however, that these men are

often working at high pressure, and it is difficult for them to get away in the mornings for Mass or Communion.

“ . . . Speaking of infantrymen at the front, I should say 50 per cent. would come occasionally to the Sacraments, and 10 per cent. regularly (monthly or thereabouts). In times of special danger, 90 per cent. or more. The proportion of men who say some kind of prayer daily is larger than one would think. I have often been told by men who have not been to the Sacraments for years that they have always said a Hail Mary or some other short prayer, before going to sleep at night.” (28.)

“ Catholic men always welcome the Sacraments. I always went round the trenches with the Blessed Sacrament every day, and in this way hundreds of Communion were made. Men have come over to me under very heavy shell fire to receive the Sacraments. After a very heavy shelling at N. a man came running after me up the trench and said :

“ ‘ Father, I heard you were here, and I thought I could not come too quickly.’ ”

“ He had been away from the Sacraments for years. Nearly all the men I have met pray at least once a day, and of course in the line, much more.” (2.)

“ Frequent Communion was on the whole rare, but the reason of that seemed to me—the difficulties of confession, and their training in the idea that it was necessary to be ‘ very good already ’ before daring to approach Holy Communion.” (23.)

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“Speaking roughly, the fervour of the men’s Catholicity was at any moment proportioned to the amount of danger that was to be faced. Slackers more plentiful in auxiliary troops than in the front line units. Danger gave a temporary stimulus, but, when removed, left things pretty much as they were. The main point, to my mind, is that the Catholic religion really worked in war conditions, and that men readily availed themselves of any opportunity of approaching the Sacraments. But this opportunity had to be made for them by the chaplain. It is very rarely that a man will refuse to go to Confession if approached individually, even though he has been away from the Sacraments for a long term of years.” (26.)

“A big private broke into my tent one night, looking for some kind of an evening service. He had been going four or five kilos every night to the nearest chapel. He spoke with grand simplicity of spiritual things, with as much interest as others would discuss the latest war news. He told me that the war had opened his eyes. He subscribed to the Propagation of the Faith and was a Knight of the Blessed Sacrament. At last I had to hint that it was nearly time for my dinner and I wanted to say my rosary. Could he say it with me, he asked. So we said it together and he left.

“There was a little shanty some kilos away—church and priest’s billet combined. Every night from six to a dozen men would congregate. After a smoke and chat with the chaplain, a curtain was pulled aside, revealing an altar. Rosary, Confession, and Holy Communion followed. A fine young officer, full of life, turned in one night

and went to the Sacraments. He was shot next day on the way to the trenches. . . .

“I have certainly been disappointed at times at men not taking opportunities of the Sacraments when we were out at rest. . . .

“Once I got into a farm in which occupants still lived. They arranged a little altar. I deposited the Blessed Sacrament and went to get the men. When I came back, the family were kneeling, keeping watch. Twenty-six received Communion in that kitchen, after I had given a little talk on *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum*. . . .

“A Lieutenant going to a dangerous position that night, came one afternoon anxious for Holy Communion. I told him to return to my tent in an hour, and rode back to the nearest inhabited village for the Blessed Sacrament. He received, and remained kneeling on the ground for his quarter of an hour thanksgiving.” (6.)

“As to voluntary services, I have found the men quite good in this respect. When out of the trenches, each night we had Rosary and Benediction. Never less than 150 to 200 men came out of 800. On Sundays and other festivals, of course, the proportion was much higher.

“During the last three years, we have never missed Rosary and Benediction each evening. The great bulk of the men here came three or four times a week, many almost nightly.” (24.)

“I had a barn chapel, in May and June 1917, at Neuve Eglise. Certain men never missed their evening visit of half-an-hour or longer all the time they were there. A few of them went to Holy Communion every evening. A Presbyterian

and three or four C. of E.s used also to come every night to pray there. Many of the men came from long distances. The same happened at a barn chapel I had near Ouderdoom. One Manchester lad spent an hour there every night and received Holy Communion. He used to come two miles to get there.

"The same was my experience at Bapaume in a patched up chapel among the ruins from December 1917 to March 1918. I used to be there from 8 to 12 on Sundays, hearing Confessions, giving Holy Communion, and saying my Masses. One officer used to ride there, coming out of the trenches, and men used to come from the heavy guns which were fairly close, and from ammunition dumps as well as from the line. It used to be full for Mass, and there were generally fifty or sixty at Benediction, when it was possible and safe to have one. Practically all these were voluntary comers who had seen my placards in the ruined streets.

"One morning I went to say Mass there and found two gunners sleeping against the chapel door. It was bitterly cold and they must have been exhausted. I managed to get in without waking them and was just vested to say Mass when a voice from the door said, 'Father, will you hear my confession?' The two men were Catholics, had seen my notice about daily Mass, and were afraid of oversleeping, as they had brought their guns down from Ypres and only arrived late at night, and yet wanted to go to Communion before the attack, and thought I would *have* to rouse them before I could enter the door. One was a Yorkshireman.

"A few days before that, I found a company of men from a trench mortar battery, having

been dumped at the rail-head, had found my chapel at midnight, and promptly settled down there by forcing a window. I aroused them by arriving at my usual Mass hour. There was one Scotch lad sleeping in front of the canvas-covered timber altar, with his head on a box on which my valise and altar vestments were. Incidentally the valise was my Tabernacle, and the Scotch lad was the only Catholic of the party. He was rather pleased to find where he had been sleeping, and better pleased to get such a chance of Mass and Holy Communion." (1.)

"In the Bois de Courton (Marne) I went about with the Blessed Sacrament, hunting for the men who had been a long time without facilities. I got them in groups of four or five under trees—my hat on the ground was my altar. They were glad of the opportunity. The Germans did not leave us undisturbed." (6.)

"One of my battery drivers in a battery wagon lines, after I had managed to get nearly all to Mass and Holy Communion, one Sunday, said: 'Father, I find if I get to Mass on Sundays I can keep straight during the week,' and I have heard that over and over again in different ways from gunners and drivers." (1.)

"They showed, with but few exceptions, great eagerness to go to Mass." (23.)

"A large number never go near the priest for fear of Confession. *Every* case I have tracked has been due to marriage with or engagement to a Protestant woman. They will go to Mass and say their morning and night prayers and the rosary.

“A smaller number only go to Mass when forced by the Army.” (17.)

“The only comparison I can make is between the time before and after the ‘baptism of fire.’ I was training with my division for some ten weeks before it left England, and we were a fortnight in France before we came into action. When I joined the division it had been in training for about ten months. The men were fed up with drill and camp routine, and grumbling that they could not get to the front. They feared the war would be over before they got there. They had no conception what war meant: we saw few returned warriors in those days. They were in hospitals and did not get drafted into new units.

“During these ten months very little had been done for the men spiritually beyond a Sunday Mass. As we were likely to go abroad very shortly, I determined that something stirring must be done, and I started off with what I was pleased to call a ‘Mission’—relying on the magic of that word to help me. I boomed it as well as I could in my utter ignorance of military formations, orderly room procedure, and the rest. On the final Sunday, as the result of a good deal of donkey work, that effort got 10 per cent. out of 600 men to the Sacraments. And the 60 communicants on the Sunday morning made a very great impression. No one had ever seen more than a handful of men going to Communion in camp before.

“When finally orders came for us to go abroad, perhaps another 10 per cent. came to their duties. Probably not so many.

“I found a lot of heavy drinking and immorality among the men. Then we went to France. After

ten days in billets we received orders that we were to go into a great battle, and we advanced to Loos by a series of five night marches. During our halts I tried to find new candidates for the Sacraments. I secured very few, and on the morning that we were going into battle I got a fair number for Mass, which I said on a plough drawn up against a haystack : but there were only 25 for Confession and Communion.

“So much for the state of affairs before we had experienced war.

“At Loos we had a terrible gruelling, and lost half our effectives. The effects on the spirituals of the survivors were marvellous. When we got back into billets, where we stayed refitting for about a fortnight, I was busy in the confessional of a village church every single night. And from then onwards it was only the few that wanted beating up for Mass and the Sacraments. When we were doing duty in the line, large numbers of men were at the Sacraments between every turn of duty in the trenches.

“To the objection that this was a religion of fear and superstition, my answer is that faith in the four last things had been dormant, and it had taken heavy artillery to wake it up. But the faith was there, and when it woke up, the men knew what they had to do, and realized its real importance. It was nothing like superstition.

“And the contrast between the effect of the guns on Catholics and their effect on others was remarkable. It showed how utterly devoid of religion the bulk of Englishmen are. Death to the multitude seemed to have no more spiritual significance than to complete pagans. It only seemed to emphasize the necessity of having a good time (which of course means a pretty bad time) when in billets, in case

it should be the last chance. Men drank and misbehaved before going into battle, and if they came out safe, made haste to drink and misbehave again.

“My Catholic soldiers, who were induced by the realities of their faith, which death and danger brought home to them, to frequent the Sacraments, reaped the natural fruit of the practice—experienced the sweets of religion, formed consciences, became holy.

“But the ignorance was amazing. It was not only older men, who had been twelve, fifteen, twenty and more years away from the Sacraments, who had the haziest notions about the Mass, about the essence of sin, of how to make a confession, and so on. Lads of eighteen and twenty were often just as ignorant.

“And I put it down to this ignorance that extraordinarily few men made visits of their own initiative to the Blessed Sacrament, when, for short periods, we found ourselves with the opportunity to do so. I could generally rely on a few good fellows turning up on my suggestion if I announced a time when I could be there myself and say the rosary with them: but those who went quite ‘on their own’ were very rare birds.

“Let me give one story, which shows both the ignorance and the docile goodwill of the Catholic soldier. I was hearing Confessions in a village church one evening, and giving Holy Communion, too, according to our dispensation. I came out of the box to give Communion, and at the same time a new group of men came into the church. I said to them: ‘Wait, I want to see you when I come down from the altar.’ And after Communion, I went to them and gave them a little exhortation, and returned to the box. A penitent, who had only half heard

the direction I had given the men to wait, came in, knelt down and said nothing. So I asked him how long since his last confession.

“‘Just been, Father,’ he said, ‘and been to Communion, too.’

“‘Well, what do you want now? Is anything the matter?’

“‘Oh, have I made a mistake? I thought you wanted us back again. I thought it might be for the Last Sacraments or something.’” (35.)

“The boys are very faithful in saying their prayers.” (Can. 4.)

“About ten per cent. are well instructed and pious, receiving the Sacraments weekly and frequent in their visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Fully 90 per cent. will attend Mass and go occasionally to the Sacraments. On Christmas night, in this area, about 60 per cent. of the Catholics in the area received Holy Communion. This was a purely voluntary parade.” (Can. 1.)

“In France, I was for seven months chaplain to the — Casualty Clearing Station. Men were admitted there from probably every Canadian unit, and from a very large number of English units. Incredible though it may seem, of the Canadian and English Catholics to whom I ministered, a number had not made their first Communion; one-third had not made at least their Easter duty; and comparatively few had been to Confession within three months. I am not speaking at random; for I have always kept a nominal roll of my men, and I have noted often their names, whether they had practised their religion, and whether they received the Sacraments

when I was their chaplain. . . . I feel that great injury is being done to religion by chaplains who attempt to leave the impression, for which they must know there is no foundation, that amongst Catholic soldiers a very universal spirit of profound piety was displayed during the war." (Can. 7.)

"When I was in England, notwithstanding the fact that I exhausted every means to have my men attend Mass, and frequent the Sacraments, not more than 50 per cent. of them either went to Mass on Sunday or made their Easter duty. I was senior chaplain in a division for a considerable time; and I know, from the weekly reports of the other chaplains, that a much smaller fraction of the Catholics of their units practised their religion." (*Ibid.*)

"At the hospital where I am now working, between forty and fifty per cent. of the patients had not made their Easter duty last year, and a similar condition existed among the patients of E— on their arrival." (*Ibid.*)

"Men in danger seem to value religion more, though there are exceptions. But all become accustomed to danger in time, and consequently become less keen in religious exercises. They do not talk much of it. My experience has been that more than half of the negligent begin to practise again. Fear has a great deal to do with it, example much, and personal solicitation by chaplains, some." (Can. 6.)

"Of the six or seven hundred Catholics in my brigade, almost every man came to the sacraments before battle. They also came up extremely well for general communions: and many came on other

days during the fighting. They would stand round the tent for a long time in bad weather to get to Confession. A lot of them said ejaculatory prayers on their way to the trenches, and used to make the sign of the Cross on their hearts during the day." (Can. 9.)

"Speaking generally, I think it is true that the faith of our men has been rendered more active during the war. Men have come to the Sacraments under conditions which were certainly not comfortable—for example, in barns, dug-outs, and estaminets, even on the roadside. One particular instance is an illustration: On a wretched November night, I remember arriving at an advanced post of a certain battery. The Catholics were notified that the priest was there to hear confessions. The men not only came in spite of the mud and rain, but when the confessions were over, the priest saw what he guessed was a man standing about ten feet away. 'Anyone else for Confession?' 'No, Father, but the boys asked me to come and thank you for coming.' Compare this and many like examples with the casual and almost indifferent attitude of people at home, who manage to get up for mid-day Mass on a Sunday!

"Just one other instance: The Priest was saying two Masses on a Sunday, one at 6.30, the second at 9 a.m. A boy arrived late for 6.30 Mass, and desired to receive Holy Communion. When told the next Mass would be at 9 at another point a little distance off, the boy said he would wait, and would not go to his lines and keep warm; he said if he did he might take a drink, as he was thirsty. And wait he did in that cold hut till 8.45 a.m., and carried the portable altar to the place fixed for the next Mass. This was in a camp in England. There one could

see the reality of the men's faith, especially in the case of the numbers of those who were up before reveille to go to Holy Communion, and also in the case of those who fasted until the late Masses in order to go to Holy Communion. One could multiply examples from England to the base, from the base to the front, and in hospitals. . . .

"In a Canadian camp in England on last Christmas, and including the Sunday after, 2070 Holy Communion were made, out of a Catholic population of 3500, with many of the men on leave at that time." (Can. 5.)

"My practice with regard to the Sacraments was to go to each man personally beforehand: and the results were excellent, *e.g.* out of 1000 men I had 864 confessions. Among the 360 men on a transport, all were at the sacraments except about 20. But, had I not approached the men beforehand, perhaps only about 25 per cent. would have come on their own." (Aus. 3.)

"About 80 per cent. pray and go to the Sacraments. This during war. The number of those going to the Sacraments fell much after the armistice." (Aus. 5.)

"It was very exceptional for men in the line not to practise their religion. Some went to the Sacraments before a battle, but not after: others *vice versa*. The number of those who did not go at all, in spite of opportunities and exhortations, would not have been more than 3 or 4 per cent." (N.Z. 1.)

"About 60 per cent. of the men went to the Sacraments just before leaving New Zealand. Another 25 per cent. before reaching the line." (N.Z. 2.)

A number of officers and men note the readiness of the Catholic men to get to Mass and the Sacraments.

CAPT. T. L. (Scots Guards).—"Most men wanted Mass and were grateful if opportunities were arranged for them. 90 per cent. out of a congregation would go to Communion. Demeanour in church, reverent; they really prayed when once there, but few on the whole went to Benediction, say, in the evening (not surprising, perhaps, if one remembers the periods out of the line—very short often)."

MAJOR A. T. (Irish Battalion: 60 per cent. Catholics).—"Practically every Catholic man and officer always went to Confession and Holy Communion before each turn in the trenches. At Mass they were very devout, and nearly all the Catholic men of the battalion went to the short voluntary afternoon services held by the padre, when we were out of the line. One or two officers nearly always served Mass on Sundays."

LIEUT. C.—"On more than one occasion I have witnessed the anxiety of the men of my battalion to go to Confession, hear Mass, and receive Holy Communion.

"The men on all occasions showed commendable eagerness to receive the Sacraments. I am speaking of when war was on. After the armistice, when chaplains were not so available, some of this eagerness disappeared. (This partly due to the difficulty of confessing in French.) Nevertheless, their attendance at Mass was fairly regular."

LIEUT. A. F.—"I remember on one occasion, just before a draft of men were going out to France, I

got the R.C.s together and talked to them of going to the Sacraments. A few went straight off. One chap I had to plead with for three days, and at last got him to go. . . . Another case I had to go at for two days, and at last he consented to go, together with another. The priest was five miles away at X., so I set off and walked with them. . . . Another fellow, after I had got him to the Sacraments on the morning of his departure, fell on my shoulder weeping, and said that it was one of the happiest days of his life, for he had not been to the Sacraments for four years. He then took out of his pocket a little bag of medals which his dead mother had given him in childhood: these he showed me with great admiration."

PTE. L. W. (Canad.).—"Our battalion were in reserve in a field and never bothered by Bosche shells. Sunday came, and Catholics were told that the parade to the nearest church (5½ kilos) would be voluntary, as the road was being shelled. Yet they all turned out in full force, and, although twice much too close to landing shells to be comfortable, escaped danger, and heard Holy Mass in the rather damaged church."

CAPT. T. (Tyneside Irish).—"The men attended Mass in the field in large numbers, though the parades were voluntary. In the villages they attended the French Mass.

"I saw the village church of Francvillers crowded continuously for three days for Confession, and a French priest assisting our own chaplains."

A BATMAN.—"As a general rule I think the Catholic of pre-war days remains the same during a campaign such as we have passed through. There are the good staunch and practising brethren, who even in

many cases, as the chance permits, increase their devotion ; there are the indifferent ones who carry on, attending Mass on Sundays and perhaps on another day as their conscience leads them, and incidentally they drop certain practices hitherto adhered to ; then lastly, there are those whom we cannot call in justice bad, but whom, if it were not for the parade service and the knowledge of mortal sin committed in missing Mass, the Church could not claim as examples of piety. Certainly, in the main, there are exceptions to the general rule. I have seen and met personally, men, who were indifferent before, and during operations the seeds, implanted by the chaplains at bases, have set them thinking and a desire to do more, owing to their previous laxity, has asserted itself, and they have continued to practise their religion more assiduously. There are very very few, I believe, who really fall away altogether, as the fear of God's judgment has kept many in the right path, if only to do the absolute necessary, according to the common known laws of a Catholic. But in all instances I never met a man who refused the Sacraments before 'going over,' and they were glad to know that at least they were going out, perhaps, prepared. Cases of men, even in the line during a 'strafe,' I have encountered myself, where they have naturally said in low whispers their Hail Mary or that very common phrase, "God have mercy on my soul."

Innumerable letters from the men express pleasure at being able to get to Mass and the Sacraments. The following extracts may suffice :

PTE. B. (L.N.L.).—"I have been to Confession and received Holy Communion in some queer

places—in an open field, before going into action, in old barns and stables, and in deep dug-outs, but it was just the same to us as receiving in the finest church.”

PTE. B. (Lanc. Fus.).—“I was able to receive Holy Communion last Sunday. I wish I could have the privilege every week.”

PTE. B. (R.A.M.C.).—“I am very pleased to say I can now get to my duties, but not every Sunday, for I am now in the mess room, and sometimes it gets late when the breakfast is over, so I make up for it the best way I can by going through the prayers at Mass out of my prayer book.”

PTE. G. (K.O.S.B.).—“I must say what a relief and comfort I find in prayer when in great danger such as heavy bombardment, and I have heard other Catholic soldiers say the very same.”

PTE. T. S.—“I am sorry to tell you that I have one of my legs lost, but I can't grumble, there is a lot worse off than me. I always prayed to the Almighty God to bring me safe through, and I always kept myself prepared for to go.”

PTE. A. J. H. (D.L.I.).—“If I had not been a Catholic, and able to receive the comforts which the Church alone can give, I think I should have gone mad.”

PTE. C. H. (Devons).—“I love the faith and the Church. I would die for it. I love to go to Mass.”

PTE. J. H. (King's Liverpool).—“I am glad to say that I go to Church every time we are on rest.”

PTE. J. M.—“It comes as a great knock when unable to go to Mass every Sunday.”

PTE. R. M.—“Most of the Catholic soldiers would rather do detention sooner than miss Mass.”

DRUMMER A. M.—“We all love our Church, and attend every Sunday.”

PTE. J. M. (R.A.M.C.).—“I am the only Catholic in this unit, but I am glad to say I get to church all right.”

PTE. S. C. (M.G.C.) “During those seven sad months of captivity, there was only one bright day, and that was September 4, when a German priest came to the village where I was working, and all the prisoners, French and English, were permitted to receive Absolution and Holy Communion. I shall never forget that date.”

PTE. W. T.—“One thing I shall always remember is that on several occasions they took the Catholic fellows to a service given for German Catholic soldiers. There was a German priest, who heard our Confessions once, although he could not understand or speak a word of English. He had a specially printed book, and looking at it, we pointed out our sins, which were translated into German at the side. So you see I have pleasant, as well as unpleasant memories of them.”

GUNNER K.—“Whenever I get a chance (which, thank God, has been fairly often lately) I always attend my duties, as really it seems to make one happier and more fit to undergo this life.”

SAPPER M. J. C. (R.E.).—“We attend the Masses out here as often as we can.”

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PTE. W. C. (R.A.M.C.).—"I do not care for the work here, mainly because one has to work seven days a week, and I cannot get out on Sunday or any other morning to go to Mass. I do manage to get to Benediction."

PTE. G. O'N. (H.A.C.).—"Of course one became very irregular in one's prayers, but during the whole three and a half years in the Army, I never had any difficulty in getting to Mass, when it was at all possible to do so, but it was often a matter of arrangement, and one had to be keen about it to get to the Sacraments.

"Outside ordinary trench warfare, in the two big battles in which I took part (Beaumont Hamel, Nov. 16, and Arras, April 17) we were all able to go to the Sacraments a few days before the fight. The Padre told us we were in for it; many men in the church were shortly going to be killed, but only God knew who, and our duty was to go to Confession and Holy Communion. I certainly noted something very distinctive about men of the Faith on these occasions—and I and many others found great strength and the will to endure given to us from the Sacraments."

PTE. L. W. (Devons).—"Me and my pals are good, but there is plenty of room to alter."

Of the American soldiers we hear the highest praise. Here are some examples :

"As an illustration of the American Catholic soldier's belief in the Sacraments, I may quote an incident that occurred at Boulogne. A chaplain noticed a group of soldiers in the market square, and asked them, 'Where are you boys stationed?' The men replied that they were a battalion in a

rest camp three miles away, and were going up the line next morning. The priest said that he would visit the camp at 6 p.m., in case any Catholics wanted to go to Confession; and at 6 p.m. he established himself on a ration box in a bell tent.

“He got up stiff and cold half an hour after midnight, having been busy for six and a half hours without a break. The men stood in a queue nearly a quarter of a mile long, waiting their turn for Confession. A couple of minutes was the length of the average confession, so the number of men who, without being ‘hunted up,’ came for their ‘duties’ in that single battalion can be calculated.

“The priest had to go without tea or supper, he had three miles’ walk to his billet for three hours’ rest, and he was back at 5 a.m. with the Blessed Sacrament to give Holy Communion to the men before their breakfast. This occurred in bad weather in winter time, but we may be sure the chaplain thanked God for the ‘stroke of luck’—the hand of God—that guided him to the market place that morning.” (19.)

“The Americans I have met [at a stationary hospital] were top-hole.”

“The Americans of New York, whom I saw whilst in training, before they had seen the line, and afterwards in hospital, were all well instructed and very fervent. I cannot speak too highly of them, except the American Italians and Spaniards, who were a bad lot, practically all I met.

“Comparing Americans and Australians with the English, I am amused when I look back. Very frequently the Americans and Australians would express a desire for Confession. ‘I have not been for a long time.’ On suggesting six or eight months, ‘No, not so long as that, but it’s a long

time. I haven't been, I should think, for four or six weeks.' The English would tell me they had been only 'lately,' which, one discovered, meant eight or ten months. This was frequent." (20.)

"Nearly all go to Mass when they can, and at least 90 per cent. frequent the Sacraments." (Fr. M.)

"Men in camps, far removed from dangers of war, seemed to me to be as they had always been at home, and in general my conclusion was, that, if a soldier was faithful to his religious duties in civil life, he was also faithful in the Army. Inspections, details of various sorts, necessary occupations prevented many from attending as they would otherwise have done. For example, a certain company seemed to fix the hour of Mass on Sunday for company inspection, and despite my complaints, it was not changed. In the hospitals there were no chapels, and the men did not like to receive Holy Communion with all the distractions attendant on ward life. There was no way to know the number of Catholics at the post, but the ordinary percentage of thirty in a hundred would have meant about five hundred or more. The usual attendance at Mass at Blois was about two hundred, and the Communions averaged about twenty-five. Some of these were weekly communicants." (Fr. H.)

"Almost every time I went into a church I found some of the soldiers praying there, and this was remarked by some of the French priests. They have been satisfactorily attentive to the Sacraments, and where there was a question of showing their faith, as, for example, at the service in the thanksgiving for the signing of the

Armistice, they crowded the Cathedral. The same for the midnight Mass at Christmas." (Fr. H.)

"The soldier appreciates more than ever before, the value of the Sacraments and the comforts and strength derived from them. I remember a scene last September in the Argonne, when our Catholic chaplain was hearing confessions under a rough shelter of boughs, during a pouring rain. The woods were in range of hostile observation, and the men were not allowed to form a line or gather in large groups. They waited patiently, wet to the skin, moving up one at a time from one bit of shelter to another; there were hundreds of those boys, and in the dusk of the next morning they came to the same place to receive Holy Communion. There was their faith in its very essence, their religion in its beautiful simplicity, the grace and help that their Church brought to them in their hour of need." (H. M.)

"The faith of Catholic soldiers has been strengthened by the war. Many have told me that they had been careless and lukewarm, but from now on, they were changed men, and were receiving the Blessed Sacrament as often as they could, and they intended to keep it up." (J. H. M., K. of C. Sec.)

CHAPTER IV

MORAL FALLS

“ ARE moral falls frequent ? Are they due to ignorance or to weakness in presence of vicious surroundings ? Do these falls imply that the moral standard of the men is permanently lowered, or are they generally followed by real contrition and amendment ? ”

“ No, certainly [moral falls], generally speaking, are less frequent than at home.

“ Of course, when back, away from the line, and amidst civilian surroundings, they do increase, among officers more than amongst men.

“ They are generally followed by real contrition.”
(14.)

“ I do not think so. For the most part such falls are due to weakness in the presence of vicious surroundings. Such falls are generally followed by real amendment, and a determined effort to improve.” (9.)

“ I did not notice any cases of moral falls during periods of rest in inhabited districts.” (4.)

“ Moral falls are not frequent. Natural reaction from trench tension. Men pick up again.” (5.)

“ Moral falls follow pretty much the same lines. The strong, stable, peace-time Catholic is the strong, reliable soldier in war time. What they see and

hear in billets and trenches is often of the filthiest : so disgustingly filthy that the Catholic who has a good home is in very little danger. The strong, sound, pure, natural love that he had imbibed for his mother, sister, wife or young girl, is a tower of strength to him, even apart from the Sacraments. Of course moments of great depression or elation, or peculiarly seductive rascals, may lead him at times to moral excesses. But his better nature reasserts itself, and it is in such *occasional* falls that he turns with all simplicity to the Sacraments.

“Occasionally, too, a man of strong animal passions, who in peace time lived in a pure atmosphere, finds an atmosphere much more congenial to his impure tendencies at the front, and he falls and falls repeatedly. But it is magnificent to see how such *will cling* to their religious duties.

“From my own experience I think that no Catholic’s moral standard becomes permanently lowered, so long as he keeps up even the bare essentials of his religious duties ; but among such essentials I would include a morning and night prayer at least *habitually*. If they drop this little habit, somehow God seems to slip out of their lives, and with Him goes that sense of sin ; and a gradual absorption of the vicious atmosphere they live in takes place.” (7.)

“My experience is that Catholic soldiers, taken as a whole, have found their religion a great support, evidenced by the fact that their moral conduct has been, speaking generally, immensely better than that of others, and that most of their falls have been due to weakness, and have been atoned for by contrition and confession.” (40.)

“Moral falls during the fighting, few : lack of opportunity, of temptation. Not wholly. They

don't *like* filthy talk, but only the very exceptional man can protest to any good purpose.

"In rest and at present (Armistice) moral falls more frequent, but moral standard not permanently lowered : real contrition and amendment." (10.)

"I think that the moral standard of our men has on the whole been lowered. Reasons :

"1. The lack of moral sense pervading the Army as a whole. Men coming from good Catholic homes are at first shocked by the impure expressions, jokes, and conduct of their companions, but only the very strong can resist the degrading influences to which they are continuously subjected.

"2. In the field men live largely on their reserve of nervous energy. The connection between nervous excitement and immorality seems to me to explain in part the fact of so many men indulging their passions when they get back to rest or go on leave." (13.)

"Moral falls are very frequent, as the example of others, officers and men, is so bad ; but still, a very considerable proportion of young men keep out of it. My confessional experience is constant in telling me that if a soldier keeps up some practice of prayer, and attends Mass when he can, there will not be *much* moral failure. Contrition (very sincere) follows very closely on any such lapse." (12.)

"I don't think the moral standard is permanently lowered." (16.)

"From very slight experience on lines of communication, and at bases, I should say moral falls are frequent there. In front-line troops, most Catholics keep straight, even when exposed to the

ordinary temptations. But in places of open and unescapable, and universal solicitations, such as —, many boys fall for the first time. I don't think that means the permanent lowering of moral standard, though it naturally makes a difference in subsequent temptations. But the general rule is that the average soldier (Protestant, too, I think) keeps straight, except under overwhelming temptation." (3.)

"Moral falls are very frequent, owing to most awful surroundings. They are often followed by real contrition." (18.)

"Moral falls not more than at home.

"*Drink.*—Outbursts on coming back from line to billets. From want (in billets and camps) of something better to do. From fun and novelty of French, Belgian, and Egyptian estaminets.

"*Impurity with Women.*—A few who have never fallen go with friends to bad houses. Of these I have known cases where they were so disgusted they came away at once. Others, after sinning once, have pulled themselves together, and never gone again. Others have gone often, led away by argument: 'Everybody does it; all the officers; even the chaplains; there's no harm in it if the woman consents.' They use that as an argument at the time, but are not permanently affected by it.

"*Stealing.*—Small thefts very common, and obviously thought very little of.

"*Swearing, etc.*—Very common. Thought very grave—very genuine contrition." (17.)

"Moral falls are very frequent, due, I think, to the surroundings of the men." (20.)

“Moral falls *contra sextum* were frequent enough, due to bad company, the easy access to bad houses, the loose behaviour of French and Belgian girls, and not a little, in the case of married men, to their long absence from their homes. Still, after, say, a serious sermon or talk, the men would make very splendid resolutions, and their ideals were not lowered.” (23.)

“Knowing the difficulties the soldiers have, I am surprised that our Catholic boys keep as straight as they do. I only met one Catholic who frankly gave up all hope of religious helps being effective: ‘It’s no use, Father: a man can’t live two lives in the Army.’

“It may be admitted that a considerable number of Catholic soldiers (I would not say the majority) did not prove equal to the difficulties; and that some would succumb repeatedly. But all the time it was *weakness*: they always had the good will to do better.” (41.)

“Moral falls, I believe, are less frequent, because external temptations to drunkenness and immorality are fewer. . . . I fear the moral standard of nearly all must be lowered in some degree, by evil example, though one meets cases of singular innocence. Obscene talking and obscene swearing are dreadfully common, though it can be put down to a great extent, if opposed by the officers. It is punished in some units with great success.” (2.)

“I prefer the recording Angel to say how ‘frequent’ are moral falls among non-Catholic soldiers. They have a lower standard, far lower, than we have, and some absolutely no standard at all. [Indirect encouragement of officers.] Add to this

the direct encouragement of comrades, of circumstances, of utter want of elementary privacy in the life, of literature, pictures, and talk all bearing on the subject, and surely the wonder is that *real* moral falls are so rare amongst our Catholic lads.

“Twenty per cent. will tell you how hard, ‘almost impossible,’ they say, it is to ‘keep straight,’ and the glorious thing is, by God’s grace, they do, even to an heroic degree. One lad of nineteen said to me one day: ‘Father, during my first fortnight in the Army I thought I was in a lunatic asylum, and it’s almost as bad sometimes now.’ More than one good Catholic lad, I know, has prayed for a good Catholic ‘chum’ to come up in the ‘next draft,’ or even tried to get to a division where he had such a friend. The presence of a priest makes a great difference to such, though, apart from Mass, he may only be able to see them in the wagon lines or at the guns. I used to wander round stables and harness rooms at almost any time, just to let some of the fellows see me, even if the Army regulation of ‘not obstructing men in the performance of their duties’ was hanging over my head, and the sergeant-major was before my eyes.

“With the batteries, and in battery dug-outs, it was different. There was danger there more immediate and palpable, and one went to get ‘religion done’ as a rule, even though it was only to hand round *The Universe* or *Stella Maris* or *Messenger*.

“I think ‘vicious surroundings’ explains the lapses—a Catholic lad doesn’t want to offend a chum, or he imitates a number of others, or curiosity leads him, and he falls before he is fully aware. I have even met cases of moral and physical force—foul-minded fellows, who made it their object to induce

a good Catholic lad to sin, and then boasted of it afterwards.

“ ‘Drink’ of course is also a means, and when men have had long days and nights loading ammunition, or taking up ammunition, or in action with the guns, a cheerful looking café ‘on rest,’ with beer and other attractions, is a great temptation. Often, too, it is the only place they can find to pass their evenings, unless they wander about or lie in their dreary billets.

“ However, I am sure the verdict of every chaplain will be that real sorrow and amendment follow these falls, and resolutions are carried out. It does not take much to show such men that the priest is their friend, and really wants to help, and that he *can* help.” (1.)

“ Moral falls are, I think, fairly frequent, but, considering all circumstances, I think not more so than in civil life. I do not think that they are due to ignorance of its dangers, but rather to weakness. The vicious surroundings of the Army, are, I think, exaggerated. A lad who wants to be good, if he has grit, will not find real opposition in the British Army. The Tommy will leave him alone and inwardly and even outwardly respect him.” (31.)

“ I fear that moral falls are frequent. They occur for the most part when the men are at the base, or resting in the neighbourhood of a big town. In some cases, no doubt, the moral standard is permanently lowered, but in the majority there comes later real contrition and a purpose of amendment. . . . Such falls are due to weakness rather than ignorance.

“ On the other hand there are a considerable

number who keep altogether free from such falls, and preserve a wonderful innocence." (28.)

"Moral falls 'fairly frequent.' It was quite clear to me that these long, long spells, away from civilization were not good for the men morally, But when they were in civilization again, soon they were perfectly normal again." (8.)

"I think we may well be proud of the moral status of our Catholic soldiers. I was certainly surprised at it. Of course there were falls." (22.)

"I cannot say that I found moral falls of frequent occurrence, so far as deeds are concerned. I should attribute such falls rather to weakness and informable environment rather than to ignorance of the sinfulness of such deeds. Neither do I think these falls imply any permanent lowering of the moral standard of the men." (29.)

"The hospital to which I was attached was a venereal hospital of about 2000 beds. I am glad to say that the proportion of Catholics was small. The men always responded to my appeal, and showed contrition for their sin, and accepted their illness and its consequences as a satisfactory punishment. Once only did I come across a Catholic who took the non-Catholic view inculcated by the medicos of regret for the disease rather than for the sin. The nurses in the hospital noticed that the Catholics did respond and attend to their duties. There were only two men who held out—they had been Catholics in name only from their youth." (25.)

"The proportion of the Catholics among venereal patients was greater than the general proportion." (31.)

“ I would be disposed to think that moral falls were, if anything, less frequent in the Army than in civilian life. While abroad there would certainly be less sin among Catholics than at home as civilians. This will not be owing to the lack of occasions. I would also imagine it to be quite the exception for a man's moral standard to be lowered in the Army.” (36.)

“ Undoubtedly they were frequent. But I am sure God made allowances for the men from the line. This was the sort of thing that happened. A man was for weeks and sometimes several months at a time living in an area of desolation—nothing but ruins of farms and villages; a shell-pocked country, strewn with miserable debris of broken equipment, rusty wire, dud shells, empty food-tins: living, whether in the trenches or not, in the most make-shift hovels: undergoing the constant strain of the whir and whine of shells, and, when forward, the swish of bullets. *Then* for one giddy, glittering day, he is given an outing in Amiens, or, in the latter days of the war, in Paris. He is given quite a lot of money. He goes in company with a crowd of the normal pagans, labelled C. of E., and the lot of them, who, for weeks and months have never seen a woman, let alone been for years separated from mothers, sisters, wives, are set upon by the harpies. Surely big excuses can be made for the Catholic who, under abnormal conditions such as these, followed the crowd into one of the innumerable brothels. Splendid lads fell in this way, often to their own utter amazement that such a thing had been possible. There was no mistaking the genuineness of their contrition afterwards.” (35.)

“ I came across few moral falls among R.Cs.; they were due to curiosity when on leave, or the

fear of not being considered 'sports': their amendment was immediate, as a rule, and lasting; of course some cases were relapses, but only a few. Their sorrow was real, and they would, in conversation, sometimes refer regretfully to the past. With fresh troops coming out, some would lose their heads at the facility of vice, but steadied and improved religiously afterwards. The bulk made it a point of seeing a priest or enquiring as soon as ever they landed, and improved even on that. I was struck by the really high standard of morality, especially among the men from Lancashire: even old stagers of three years out East seemed to value their religion more and more." (26.)

"From my experience, serious moral lapses are, or have been, extraordinarily infrequent. When they have occurred they have been due to drink, and have been associated to visits to the base on leave; they do not imply any permanent lowering of the moral standard, and have almost invariably been followed by real contrition and amendment. The surroundings are, in my opinion, far more favourable in military or war life to those of civilian life of the same class of men in larger towns and cities. The foul language, which is undoubtedly a blemish in the Army, appears to have no effect on the life of thought or action of the men from the standpoint of purity." (37.)

"Very many Catholics fall: but *repeated* falls are not common among practising Catholics. The moral standard is not permanently lowered. The men will, I think, pick up when they get home. The influence of their own women will pick them up again." (Aus. 2.)

“Moral falls are frequent. The majority have fallen: but I believe that the practical Catholic does not fall frequently or through having acquired a *habit* of sin. The vast majority of falls occur on leave, and are generally due to loneliness, desolation, and the absence of good women. Our Australians show a selective chivalry in the matter. One often hears them say that they will be glad to be among good Australian girls again. The unrestrained immorality of the streets of Paris and London have had a frightful influence.” (Aus. 3.)

“I believe that the men are as mad as snakes when they come out of the line. They are high strung, and their moral responsibility lowered. Falls are then more frequent than in peace time. But a good number go straight in spite of all temptations. As soon as they get into decent surroundings and meet women with respect for themselves, they will be all right.” (Aus. 4.)

“The Army life tends to moral falls. The conversation and habits of non-Catholics are always low and degrading. Consequently even Catholics are led into sin. Many, however, led pure lives. I do not think the moral standard of a great number will be permanently lowered.” (Aus. 5.)

“Frequent, I think: more frequent than in ordinary life. I have met a large number of Catholics who have not fallen at all.

“Certainly, falls are followed by real contrition and amendment. The men are anxious to do anything in the material or temporal way that would take them out of dangerous occasions. Falls are not due to ignorance, but to vicious surroundings. If the men had come in touch with any bit of home life, it kept them out of falls.” (N.Z. 1.)

“ Perhaps about half the boys have fallen very occasionally through weakness. (The rest have kept clear altogether. This I put down to home training and respect for their own people.) They always come back. Very few go right wrong.” (N.Z. 2.)

“ The vicious surroundings account for the most moral falls. I do not think that their moral standard is permanently lowered.” (Can. 6.)

“ Moral falls frequent. Due to ignorance and to weakness in presence of vicious surroundings. Mostly the second, through constant contact with unmoral non-Catholics. Some ask whether sexual immorality is *always* a mortal sin, etc. But I think they really *know* it is.” (Can. 3.)

“ Moral falls are, I regret to say, frequent. They are due, not so much to ignorance as to bad companions and the occasions of sin. Leave is the greatest curse that has yet befallen Colonial troops. The boys spend their fourteen days in London or Paris, where, with plenty of money, and without friends, they sooner or later fall a prey to the harpies of those cities. Yes, they repent their fall, and go to Confession before they return to the line. But one knows that, however good their intentions, the next leave will be but a repetition of the last.

“ To counteract the evils of English and French cities, we persuaded a considerable number of men to spend their leave at Lourdes. Our experiment was attended with the happiest results, both spiritually and physically.” (Can. 4.)

“ [Catholic soldiers] in training camps, practically free from danger and surrounded with many tempta-

tions, and living in an immoral atmosphere, very often become lax and indifferent. Moral falls through all ranks were very frequent. Many are addicted to drink. The language of the average soldier is most obscene and blasphemous, the surroundings were truly vicious. . . . Consequently many fall through weakness and vicious surroundings. While many will repent, I am afraid that the moral standard will be permanently lowered." (Can. 1.)

"Moral falls frequent. Generally followed by contrition and amendment. But usually no real *permanent* amendment while the reason remains." (Can. 2.)

"Not frequent in France, apart from time of Armistice. The majority of men went through unscathed. On leave the men were besieged, and of course some fell. Thousands of men (including many Protestants) joined the Holy Name Society." (Can. 9).

"Moral falls are fairly frequent, and are generally followed by real contrition and amendment. The conditions of war have removed the men from normal surroundings—many of them, in fact, boys in the literal sense. The marvel of it all is that the morals of our men are not worse. The saddest of all sad things, during this war—and it is worse now—is, the temptations that our men have been up against in the towns of old England—London worst of all. And nothing seems to have been done to render these occasions even remote. . . . The terrible toll of moral casualties are undoubtedly due in a large measure to vicious surroundings. . . ." (Can. 5.)

Catholic officers and men report as follows :

PTE. G. O'N. (H.A.C.).—"Among Catholics I don't think serious moral falls would be very much more frequent though the opportunities of sin in France in the bigger towns was rather great. I was very fortunate in mixing with fine specimens of the Faith, so perhaps my experience is not very representative. Of course when one lives in an atmosphere of very foul language, with the average topic of conversation drinking and women, it does not tend to lift one exactly, and I fear too many take the line of least resistance. I think the average young soldier wants to impress on his friends the fact that he's a 'terrible dog,' but I don't think these young fellows are half as bad as they make themselves out to be."

SERGT. J. A.—"Lapses only of a temporary nature, usually followed by Confession and Holy Communion."

CAPT. T. L. (Scots Guards).—"I can't imagine that there is any ground for saying that their 'moral standard is permanently lowered.' Why should it be?"

L.-CPL. W. H. (S.W.B.).—"From my short experience in the Army [the immorality] isn't as bad as it is painted, and when it does occur, I don't think it is the fault of the soldier."

SAPPER J. S.—"Not so much with the ordinary Tommy, as he is not out of the line so much as all that."

A BATMAN.—"Regarding ordinary faults, which are sure to crop up in some cases, I fancy they are due to the environment. As the general rule, the conversation of men usually turns on the immoral

and immodest side of life, and he is indeed a strong man who can listen and yet not hear. I have known quite a number whose train of thought when out of the usual environment is on a higher plane, but on the whole the knowledge that they are Catholics never escapes their memories, although they have to fight their battles in their own way and according to their mental and religious capabilities."

LIEUT. A. F.—“As regards moral falls, etc., I would divide the R.C.s into two classes :—(a) The fairly solid Catholics. (b) The careless Catholics. In (a) I think the war has strengthened his faith, given him a greater love of his Church and a greater idea of human weakness, thereby strengthening him against moral falls.

“In (b) I would say that he has become more careless in his vicious surroundings, and has tried to drown his conscience in more sin.

“Of course there have been cases in (a) which have become (b). I know of two cases. And (b) has become (a) in a few instances.”

LIEUT. C.—“Moral falls, I imagine, are no more frequent in time of war than in time of peace—at least among Catholics. . . . I have never heard of anyone whose fall was not followed by contrition, and at least an effort at amendment.”

MAJOR C. T.—“The moral standard of the Catholics was, so far as I was able to judge, remarkably high in the battalion, and moral falls, with the exception of a certain amount of drunkenness, unusually rare. I think it safe to say that this was due to the religion of the men.”

PTE. R. (Royal Sussex).—“I have not found moral falls to be frequent among Catholic soldiers, and

when they occur, it is often through the influence of some bad companion or circumstance."

LIEUT. C. (London Regt.).—"These falls are not permanent, for they are generally followed by real contrition and amendment."

PTE. T. C. (R.A.M.C.).—"I never heard from any [Catholic soldiers] expressions of revolting coarseness, neither did they display a disregard of the moral laws especially with regard to the ever recurring topic of sexual relationships. This is my honest experience."

LIEUT. G. E. G.—"Moral falls were not frequent for two reasons—the prospect of going into action at any moment and the lack of opportunities.

"I am not competent to speak of the morality of any except those in fighting units. It did happen that long periods of hardship and suffering led to immoral excesses, and these were not due so much to vicious surroundings as to that weakness which demands compensation for privations in drink and excess. . . . In many cases the moral standard was permanently lowered, and in other cases, of course, real contrition followed."

CAPTAIN W. G. (Canadian M.O.).—"Unfortunately my morning sick parade, at which, during well nigh four years, I have seen the sick of units located everywhere from positions in the front line in France or Belgium to training units at home, has not tended to enhance my estimation of the morality of the average man.

"Certainly, without the Church, the majority of them wholly ignore the restraints which the sixth commandment, as elaborated by our moralists, impose upon mankind. In his views upon personal

morals, marriage, or the relation of the sexes, the average non-Catholic is frankly and practically a sense-utilitarian, and when, through his disregard of the moral law and the behests of the would-be physician of his soul, he was forced to seek the application of the medical law and the ministrations of the physicians of bodies, he exhibited neither sense of shame, remorse of conscience, nor sign of reform, once cured.

“Conspicuously few, in proportion to numbers, were, among Catholics, these undeniable pathological proofs of immorality. Every man paraded sick to a medical officer was accompanied by a nominal roll, upon which was entered, amongst other things, the religion of the patient: and I recall that the occasions upon which “R.C.” appeared after the names of cases reporting with venereal disease, were few. I recall, too, that when Catholics did so present themselves, they usually were very ashamed, and they showed plainly in their manner that they were presenting the proof of a moral laxity which in conscience they knew to be wrong. This was in striking contrast to the “matter-of-course” attitude of the non-Catholics.

“Anyone who was anything of a psychologist could see that conscience in the Catholic must act as a powerful deterrent to immorality. Granted the deterrent did not prove sufficiently strong in these particular cases. But undeniably it was there, and one felt certain that those who possessed it could withstand greater temptations than one who possessed it not, or that, once fallen, the remorse engendered by the fall would render the repetition more difficult in their case, not easier as in the case of non-Catholics.

“I think I could put my experience of religious systems, as modifiers or directors of conduct, as

they have proven under war conditions, into a few words. Catholicism stands as something unique, as the only system capable of influencing in every aspect man's motivation. Various influences may act as powerful deviating influences in some one especial direction. Patriotism, for example, or "esprit de corps" may make a man do brave things, the instinct of self-preservation may make him appear a Paladin of courage. Love of a woman may keep him chaste, or ambition may compel him to put forth his best efforts. But the *one* thing which can and does energize that infinitely-faceted thing, motive, which can and does make a man brave, courageous, chaste, or painstaking, is Catholicism. It is my candid belief that, in the acts of men, Catholicism and its teaching acts as often as a motivating factor as all other influences added together: more than that, its influence is always towards what is best.

American chaplains write :

"I can state emphatically that as far as the Catholic men of my regiment are concerned, and especially since their arrival in Europe, moral falls are no more frequent than before they entered the Army." (Fr. M. H.)

"The frequency of moral falls depends largely on the soldiers' circumstances and surroundings, and in the camps on the fact of their being well occupied and provided with recreation, etc. I do not consider that such occasional falls permanently lower the moral standard of the men, as they are nearly always followed by Confession." (Fr. M.)

"My opinion is that the condition of the billeting and the policing of the district must necessarily

be taken into consideration. It cannot be denied that our soldiers in France met with a condition unknown at home, viz., the indiscriminate street walking, and the common acceptance of the necessity of prostitutes. Temptations assailed them in every city street, and the fact that they were in a strange land, and away from the guiding influence of virtuous parents, lessened their powers of endurance. However, one thing stands out prominently, and that is that the Catholic youth were ashamed of these things, and as far as I could judge, seemed to restrain their passions, and if they did fall, it was not a permanent one, but was followed by repentance and confession." (Fr. H.)

"Moral falls are frequent, due mostly to environment, but in no manner does it mean that the real manhood is lowered. It is invariably followed by sorrow, contrition, and a promise of amendment." (J. H. M., K. of C. Secy.)

CHAPTER V

PRODIGALS AND SAINTS

“ How many negligent and slack Catholics return to the practice of their religion ? Is this only from a passing motive of fear ? ”

“ Have you met many souls of exalted sanctity ? Many who showed great love of the Blessed Sacrament when within reach of churches for private visits ? ”

This is the most encouraging section of our report. There can be no doubt that enormous numbers of Catholics have returned to the practice of religion during the war, after many years of absence : and that this has not been only or even mainly due to fear. This is made even more clear in the next chapter, which deals with the wounded.

There can also be no doubt that a large number of Catholic soldiers have kept innocent through the war, and maintained a close union with God. This is confirmed by the evidence given in the last chapter. “ In spite of temptations and dangers of camp life, there are many real saints among the men,” wrote Father Denis Doyle (killed in action) in 1917.

Now we must not apply the term “ saint ” lightly : and to anticipate ecclesiastical scoldings,

the Editor must explain that by "saints" in this chapter, he means anyone that way inclined. But it seems clear that, among the Catholic boys, one may find a good deal of hankering after the perfect life. It comes out in their intimate letters, from some of which we venture to quote. The writers would no doubt be highly annoyed at the suggestion that they were saints. But they might admit that they do love Our Lord more than anybody or anything, and would take simply any trouble to please Him.

(i) PRODIGALS

"I have had hundreds of Catholics back to the Sacraments, who had not been for years. Often they come to Confession of their own accord in church, but more often it was *sub divo*, when I was 'looking up the Catholics' in billets or trenches, etc. Always they said they had been 'afraid' to come to Confession before (there must be a good many formidable confessors somewhere), even though they had wanted to in many cases. There is an element of mild compulsion about *sub divo* confessions that makes perseverance often doubtful. but I am sure some would persevere, as they were so genuinely thankful to be put straight again. (One could seldom follow up such cases, unless they belonged to one's own division, and even then not much.) I can think of many men, obviously slack Catholics at home, who were pretty regular at the Sacraments at the front.

"I must record that the men who flatly refused to go to Confession when 'cornered' could be counted on the fingers of one hand." (3.)

“ My men, even those who, previous to the war, had been careless about their religious duties, have become deeply attached to their religion and the practice of it, as shown by the fact that not only would they not miss Mass deliberately on Sunday, but they considered it a fault not to go to Confession and Holy Communion whenever the opportunity was given them.

“ Although the men were more fervent in the line, I find that many of them have continued the practice of Holy Communion since the Armistice has been signed.” (9.)

“ The number of slack and indifferent Catholics that have been brought to practise their religion and the reception of the Sacraments is very large indeed.

“ The reasons are many: compulsory church parades; access to lists of men in units, giving their religious denomination, and thus giving chaplains an opportunity of getting into personal touch with the slacker; the facilities of attending Mass in the churches of France and Belgium; the Catholic Army Huts, and the C.W.L. chapel tents, etc.; all these, besides the awful dangers and hardships of war, moved many a soul to return to the Church and religious practices.” (Can. 1.)

“ I never heard confessions without having several men who had been away for years. Practically all came up during the war.” (Can. 9.)

“ Very many ” returned to religious practice “ in the pushes of 1917.” (5.)

“ There has been an awakening of faith. The best proof of this is that a very large percentage of confessions heard by me were of men who had not been to the Sacraments for years.” (Can. 6.)

“ Inside of one month I have persuaded as many as twenty lax Catholics to return to the Sacraments. Several of these had been from fifteen to twenty-five years away, and most four or five years.” (Can. 8.)

“ Quite a considerable percentage of men have been reconciled and returned to the practice of their religion, some after many, many years’ absence.” (40.)

“ When men were preparing to go to France, a good number turned up at the Sacraments who had been away for several years. Once in the line, the slacker who had got so far without the Sacraments, often went on slacking. Immediate danger, such as impending battle, seemed to have more effect on practising Catholics than on slackers. It was the good Catholic who was anxious to go to the Sacraments before a stunt.” (N.Z. 1.)

“ A great lot came back to their religion on the boat. When these men did come back, they were the very best : active in getting others.” (N.Z. 2.)

“ During the actual war there were very few who failed to go to the Sacraments. Some had been absent from five to fifteen years.” (Aus. 5.)

“ Whether the war has affected the character of a man for good or evil remains to be seen, but it undoubtedly has brought back to the Church a great number of remiss Catholics. In fact I have never sat in the Confessional for any length of time without having one and sometimes several penitents who had not been to the Sacraments for years. Nor could their advent be attributed to fear, but rather to the good example, the advice, or the death of a dear companion.” (Can. 4.)

“ The good are better, the indifferent unchanged, the bad slightly worse. I have known one or two slack Catholics return from good motives.” (10.)

“ Large numbers of negligent Catholics have returned to the practice of their religion, and they have been most fervent in their expressions of gratitude for the opportunity.” (14.)

“ I have found nearly all lax Catholics return to their duties, and do so sincerely, with the exception of some few who had practically lost the Faith, especially among old serving soldiers. One receives the impression that the pre-war Army was not a good school for Catholics.” (16.)

“ Very many bad Catholics come to Confession, and then lead splendid lives. Motives (apart from grace) :—1. A very good opportunity and a new priest. 2. The old causes that kept them away removed. 3. The strong persuasion of friends. 4. The reality of war brings home their state to them.” (17.)

“ A large number of negligent Catholics returned to their duties during the war.” (38.)

“ Not more than 10 per cent. of the men in hospital had been away for a number of years.” (41.)

“ A good many negligent Catholics were brought back, not I think, by passing fear, but as a consequence of the personal intercourse with the chaplain, or often, some excellent Catholic comrades.” (31.)

“ When at A, and working at the Catholic Club there during several months of 1917, I was rather

surprised at the goodly number of men who came back to their duties again after several or more years of absence. I certainly think that the motive of fear has its influence, although I think that the motive of duty has still greater influence, at least with the better educated. 'I didn't like going up the trenches, Father, without first having put myself straight with God. If I have not done this I feel quite a coward when up there, and when I have done so, I don't mind going up there one bit.' This has been said to me more than once." (29.)

"It is very difficult to answer this question, as some facts incline one to answer it in one way, and some in another.

"Undoubtedly, many negligent Catholics have returned for a time to the practice of their religion. I have heard several hundred (roughly) confessions of men who had not been to their duties for many years. These confessions were undoubtedly sincere, made with real contrition at the time. I am referring now to confessions made not in time of danger, nor immediately before going into danger, but when out of the line for a period of rest.

"After making their duties, many of these long absent men would not think of coming again for some time, several months at least. And after the lapse of that time, they would require reminding; very few would come entirely of their own accord.

"I do not think it is just to say that such men come 'only from a passing motive of fear.' They seem to have for the time being a real sense of their sinfulness before God, and a genuine desire for forgiveness and purpose of repentance. Religious emotions, long latent in their souls, have been stirred up, as it were, by the nearness of death." (28.)

“ I have found that most negligent or slack Catholics return to the practice of their religion after one or two talks. It is not due to a motive of fear (‘ wind up ’) but, as in parishes, to a certain timidity in approaching the priest on their own, after they have been long away.” (Aus. 2.)

“ If left to themselves, very few slackers would come along. They need repeated invitation, and one has to do about three-quarters of the work for them.

“ When the priest comes and makes it easy for them they go all right, and it is easy to get them to come again.” (Aus. 3.)

“ It is the exception to get a refusal. The major part of those whom I knew to have been away from the Sacraments for a long time, have come to their duty when spoken to about it individually,—and some without being spoken to at all.

“ The war has increased men’s sense of the presence of God. Yet I have known slackers who have been over the top three or four times, and *then* come of their own accord.” (Aus. 4.)

Of the American soldiers one of their chaplains writes :

“ Practically every Catholic who had been previously negligent in his religious duties returned to the practice of the faith. In only one case did anyone refuse to go to Confession when we were in the trenches. This fervour in their religious life, in the field at any rate, was no doubt in many cases due to a motive of fear, but I would not say a passing motive. They had time, and the occasions and the life of hazard encouraged them, to reflect upon and ponder over religious

truths and moral conduct, with the element of fear leaving what I am sure are more or less lasting resolutions for amendment in their lives. Of course, some things would appear on the surface to be entirely due to a motive of intense fear. For example, I can recall four distinct cases while our lines were subjected to bombardment, where individuals came to Confession, and admitted that marriages outside the Church, before non-Catholic ministers or civil magistrates, had prevented them from coming sooner to the Sacraments. But no matter how much fear was the motive in these cases because of the bombardment, their contrition was so apparent, and their promises to straighten out their tangles at the earliest opportunity so sincere, that I am convinced that their resolutions then formed will be faithfully carried out when they return to America.

From a K. of C. Secretary :

“ Catholic men at times grow careless unintentionally at the beginning. It may be that there is no priest or church where they happen to be, and so they can't go to Mass. After a few Sundays go by, it is easy to stop away, and they don't bother themselves much about it. But in time of danger or sickness they all call for the priest.”

(ii) “ SAINTS ”

“ If I said hundreds, you would think I was exaggerating, but I'm not. Young, innocent boys and old soldiers from India, living the holiest, most supernatural lives, devoted to the Blessed Sacrament, men of prayer. I admit they are mostly Irish or Scotch-Irish, but there are some English as

well, and, as usual, I exclude Lancashiremen, who count as Irish.

“These men will visit a church, if there is one, every evening, and spend an hour in prayer on their knees, or make the Stations of the Cross. They give me money for Fr. Berry’s Homes and for Masses. There are very few pious talkers, but I am speaking from Confessional knowledge and observation.” (17.)

“I have met some souls of singular sweetness and innocence, and these I have found remain unspoiled by Army life in war time, but whether they would continue in the Army so under peace conditions, I cannot say.” (16.)

“One sergeant would hear as many as three Masses a morning, when out of the line, and spend an hour or more before the Blessed Sacrament every day. He was quite an extraordinary soul in his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

“There were always a fair number of men visiting the Blessed Sacrament whenever they had opportunity.” (14.)

“In that division there were to be found some marvels of devotion. I have had men and officers coming regularly to Confession and Communion every time they came out of the trenches, even though they had to come over three miles over bad roads, and in the most inclement weather.

“I have come across old men, who used to pay regular visits to the church every day, but, as unfortunately, most churches came to be closed, I had not often the opportunity of observing this.” (15.)

“ I have met several daily communicants, who often walked a considerable distance in order to receive Holy Communion.” (13.)

“ I meet and have met with many men, young and old, who pass months and months without the shadow of a mortal sin. Many make a daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament.” (12.)

“ Yes, many who had *maiolem caritatem* in the full, conscious Christian sense, and spoke of it simply and naturally as a commonplace. War has made lots of good Catholics into sheer saints. They are nearly always killed sooner or later, for a variety of obvious reasons.

“ As regards love of the Blessed Sacrament, there are notable instances, but I should not say that a large percentage made private visits habitually.” (3.)

“ I have met a few men who were saints, and, being saints, were ignorant of their sanctity. There are always a few in each battalion, who frequently visit the Blessed Sacrament when they can possibly do so.” (Can. 4.)

“ I have met quite a number of soldiers of wonderful purity of conscience, and some who had a great love of the Blessed Sacrament. Several times I have dropped into a church and found a ‘ boy,’ who told me he had just been asking Our Lord to send him a priest so that he might have Confession and Communion.” (7.)

“ Here and there, especially, I must say, amongst later arrivals. One boy, having read a letter from his sister, a religious, ‘ Si le Bon Dieu veut l’expiation de votre sang, donnez le lui genereusement,’ said to me, ‘ Mon Père, je suis bien pret.’

“ In general the men are capable of fervent devotion, if well fed (spiritually, I mean). A *real* church or chapel, congregational singing, devotions to the Blessed Sacrament, *and* the liturgical idea, always attract an élite.” (Can. 3.)

“ I have known a number of men who spent practically all their free time in presence of the Blessed Sacrament, when we were near a church. They also received Holy Communion each day. I have heard of one man who would not take advantage of the dispensation from fasting from midnight, and who remained fasting till eight o'clock at night in order to be able to receive Holy Communion.” (9.)

“ I have met men who wanted to go to daily Communion, and do so now they have the chance ; and they always show the greatest respect for everything religious, and are not afraid of their religion.” (8.)

“ I have met many very earnest and devout Catholics who made real sacrifices to hear Mass and get to the Sacraments.” (22.)

“ I came across many really holy men—innocent and pure despite the filthy talk which is common to barracks and tents. This was to me very wonderful, because one met these upright souls everywhere amongst all types of troops and in all grades. Many meditated regularly, and practised the presence of God in their daily routine—often of a very humble kind. I came to find out that if a man said his morning and night prayers fairly regularly, he never went far wrong. My experience is based on a number of detached units (about 100 different ones at a time), which were often isolated from the ordinary area of divisional chaplains, so

that they had no opportunity for Mass, Confession, and Holy Communion." (25.)

" I have met several cases of what I should call sanctity in hospitals, that manifested itself in marvellous patience under suffering, and, in some instances, a readiness to suffer as atonement for sin." (27.)

" Quite a number who took a great deal of trouble to get to Mass or Sacraments." (32.)

" A large proportion of the converts showed great fervour. They do visit the Blessed Sacrament, especially in France. On leave some go to Mass daily and frequent Communion." (Aus. 2.)

" A few really holy souls." (Aus. 3.)

" Both when in the line and at the base, it has been my privilege to come across a number of men who appeared to be of exalted sanctity: men, who took the chance, given by a few days in 'rest billets' to spend a long time daily in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

" The experience of a chaplain at an 'Army Rest Camp' near Boulogne was similar. He told me of groups of men who used to come up to the village church after dinner, and spend an hour or so on their knees. He asked one of them one evening: 'Are you not going to the special concert at the Y.M.C.A.?' 'No, Father, I'm happier here in the chapel. It is a long while since I had the chance of saying my prayers in quiet.'" (19.)

" A great many cases of men to whom religion was something that they wanted to get more and more of. The Sacraments a real joy to them." (41.)

“ I met quite a lot of young lads and men of eminent virtue, pure as angels, and willing to serve God in a heroic manner ; but if the K.B.S. were pushed more, and frequent Communion more constantly inculcated, we would get more.” (31.)

“ I have met a few very good souls, very pure, and very careful to make use of opportunities of getting to the Sacraments, even when they were far away from the line.” (29.)

Other chaplains (5, 10, N.Z. 1 and 2, Can. 2) say much the same.

“ A chaplain told me that when he had given the last Sacraments to a boy, he asked if he were willing to make the sacrifice of his life. ‘ Sure, Father,’ the boy replied. ‘ I did that five months ago, with the intention that peace might come soon.’ That boy was a French Canadian.

“ Another boy, when two chaplains were giving instructions each evening with a ‘ question box’ in the Church Hut :—One question ran thus ‘ How does a person proceed in becoming a lay brother ? Could he join an order where he would be sent as a missionary or to the lepers ? ’ The person who asked that question had seen something of the horrors of war, and had been wounded.

“ Again, when a man returned to Canada, and his parish priest suggested that he might have a vocation to the priesthood, the man, in writing back to the chaplain said, ‘ Father, if I could say Mass just once, I would gladly give my life.’ ” (Can. 5.)

“ Some men were always wanting Holy Communion.” (Can. 9.)

“ I have met many who have showed quite exceptional devotion towards the Blessed Sacrament. There are many in this camp who have scarcely ever missed Benediction, and often at great inconvenience to themselves. One young soldier, a K.B.S. (which, by the way, has done admirable work out here) though only just convalescent, walked four miles, fasting, in order not to miss his weekly Communion.

“ Another young lad will get up at 5 a.m. in order to communicate in French church before the heavy day's work begins. In his last letter to me he writes—‘ In the position I am now in, though I am not keen on it (*i.e.* the work), I can get to Mass and Holy Communion frequently. That is the main thing.’

“ A young officer, whom I met in a dug-out, begged me to give him Holy Communion, for he said—“ I can stand anything if I have received the Blessed Sacrament.” He told me his one desire after the war was to go into a strict contemplative order, and he thought that Caldey would be his line. I do not know whether he survived.” (24.)

“ In nearly every body of men containing Catholics, there are some devout ones. By *devout* Catholics, I mean men who have a special relish for prayer, and who pay visits to the Blessed Sacrament daily, or even more often if they have the opportunity. The proportion is of course small, and varies in different units ; it is not likely to be more than one in twenty. I do not know that I have met anyone of ‘ exalted sanctity ’: that is a high term. But these devout men are in a sense saintly, inasmuch as they are genuinely pious and conscientious as to their work and their lives.” (28.)

Several chaplains speak of vocations to the priesthood discovered or matured during the war :

“ Some lads have found vocations in the trenches. Three very striking cases have come my way, all too intimate to relate. The great appeal in each case seemed to take form—‘ I want to help others.’ . . . ‘ I want to be near Our Lord, to be like Him as much as I can.’ . . . ‘ I can’t live merely for myself after this war is over.’ One of these men was a convert, and another a lad who was convinced that he had ‘ stifled ’ a vocation years ago.” (1.)

“ Possible vocations to the priesthood about half a dozen.” (Can. 5.)

“ A good many pre-war vocations rendered insecure by the idea that lapses, incidental to Army life, had rendered a man ‘ unworthy.’ A retreat, or even less, has always set this right. Many directly born of war-experiences, some, like conversions to the Faith, involving really heroic sacrifice.” (33.)

The deep religious earnestness of our Catholic men came out most strikingly in the whole-hearted way in which numbers of them made spiritual retreats :

“ I used to give retreats to an average of four or five men at a time. They came in for them after their day’s work, often involving a considerable inconvenience to the men. I gave points for about twenty minutes, and they thought about them for another quarter of an hour. The number of meditations varied from twelve to twenty, spread out to three to seven days to suit their leisure time. I gave three retreats regularly once or twice a week,

and the men were always keen once they had listened to the first two meditations of St Ignatius. I followed St Ignatius' text very closely. In this way I found some vocations to the religious life, and some excellent workers for the cause of God." ¹ (25.)

PTE. G. O'N. (H.A.C.).—"I have known a private, in a Highland Regiment, of great sanctity and holiness. He was killed, poor fellow. *R.I.P.*

"I have met many most excellent Catholic soldiers. The finest, purest, bravest, and noblest men I have met out in France have been Catholics."

PIONEER R. W. (Signal Service).—"So far I have lived up in as close a union with Jesus as before I joined the Army, in fact I have seen it more clear than ever that God is our only hope and light."

PTE. P. (H.Q., Trouville).—"I am pleased to say that I have the chance to go to Mass and Communion every morning here. I have never had the chance before."

PTE. X. (R.G.A.).—"The reason I am writing to you is as follows. For some time past I have noticed nine out of every ten men, not only in the Army, but almost everywhere, have the awful habit of blasphemy. . . . It may come to you as a big surprise when such a crisis is passing over the world. Men should be praising that Holy Name, asking for mercy. But to give them their justice, they say it without knowing of their wrong. Still,

¹ For an account of some fifty retreats to about five hundred Catholic officers, cadets and men at Isleworth and Oxford, see *Retreats for Soldiers*, by C. Plater, S.J., and C. C. Martindale, S.J. Published by Harding & More, 119 High Holborn, London. Price, 2s. 6d. Fr. Martindale has also given a series of retreats to the Catholic men at the Roehampton Hospital.

to us Catholics it sounds fiendish. So I am taking the liberty of writing to you, and ask you to urge upon all whom you can to pray and adore that sacred Name, and so help to make up for the injury done to it.

“The boys of the brigade, and perhaps the children of the school, could say a prayer on Sunday when, I suppose, the usual procession in honour of Corpus Christi will be held. . . . My name I ask not to be mentioned.”

PTE. B. (R.A.M.C.).—“I pass many half-hours reading sacred books, when I am alone at nights, or on the seashore.”

RFM. B.—“We used to get our prayer books out to pray every minute we had to spare ; we also said the rosary as often as we could.”

PTE. B. (Labour Coy., Italy).—“Well, I think, in my opinion, the war is bringing me in contact with my First Friend more each day.”

An American chaplain writes :

“I have met some very good, pure souls among the men. Whenever a Catholic church is within reach of the men, some of them will always be found there.” (Fr. M.)

And of the American soldiers who made retreats, it was observed that they *all* remained on their knees as before the Blessed Sacrament, during the whole hour or more of Exposition, praying with intense earnestness. Other soldier retreat-makers were content merely to come into the chapel for their assigned quarter of an hour's “guard of honour.”

The following letter was found by the sacristan of the Cathedral of Blois, on the altar of Our Lady and before the tabernacle. It is written by a soldier in the American Army on Y.M.C.A. note-paper, and the envelope is addressed "To Blessed Virgin Mary and Mother, Queen of Heaven and Earth, Mercy off Sinners." The writer signs his name :—

" My dear heavenly Mother, Blessed Virgin, I ask your mercy on me, a poor sinner. You see how I suffer without you and without your Blessed Son, Jesus Christ. You know how happy I was when I was at the Holy Mass, and receiving Holy Communion every morning before I went to work, and now, my dear Heavenly Mother, pray for me that them days will come back soon, that I will receive your Son in Holy Communion again. That good Jesus Christ sees how I suffer without Him. You know my dear Mother, how happy I spent my days with you and your Son, Jesus Christ, and now, my dear Mother, pray for me, your loving child, Walter —.

" Anser prayer soon."

CHAPTER VI

THE WOUNDED

“ To what extent do Catholic men look to their priests and their Church for help in the war ? Do they *want* the Sacraments when wounded ? ”

“ The men *want* Mass and the Sacraments. When wounded, they want the priest. I don't think they explicitly want Extreme Unction or Absolution, or even Holy Communion. They want the priest, and feel *sure* he will know what is best to be done. How many times (to complete strangers—wounded) I have said :—‘ I'm a Catholic priest. ’ ‘ Oh, Father, I'm so glad you've come. ’ ‘ Thank God you've come ’—generally an Act of Contrition and Absolution, sometimes Confession and Absolution, sometimes Extreme Unction,—very rarely Holy Communion. But *always* immense peace of mind and quiet and happiness whatever the priest has done : and this so noticeable that doctors in my field ambulance, who at first thought me a hindrance to recovery, soon looked on me as a help, especially for men who were shouting in pain and upsetting others. ” (17.)

“ When wounded they *want* the Sacraments, and lose all shyness. One has to tell them at times that they *must not* confess now, owing to their weakness or the nearness of bystanders, or that they must lower their voices as others are lying near. They die most consoling deaths. One thing I

found greatly comforted the wounded, was to tell them that they were never so like Our Lord on the Cross as now." (7.)

"The wounded certainly looked out for a priest. It was much the same as at home: some had to be found out, and others looked you up." (22.)

"Certainly, wounded Catholics usually long for the priest." (40.)

"The nurses will often ask a priest to help them with some patient who is depressed, or inclined to grumble or be troublesome, or is in great pain. They will ask afterwards, 'What on earth did you do with him?'

"One man, horribly wounded, said: 'I don't care about myself. What worries me is the Huns killing our priests.'" (41.)

"Yes, the men do want and eagerly receive the Sacraments when wounded, but here, again, they expect the priest to propose them. The priest, however, should never *propose* them, but simply announce that he is going to give them. By acting thus I have never had a man seriously ill or dangerously wounded refuse, and hardly ever had one try to postpone the reception of the Sacraments—even Extreme Unction—an immense consolation to a priest. Doctors and nurses are often surprised when a priest tells a patient that he is in danger of death, and often deeply edified when they observe his peace and resignation.

"A doctor remarked with admiration in mess one day: 'That Scotch lad said to me this morning, "Doctor, if God wants me to die, I'm ready," and died soon after.' He was surprised when I told him that I had just prepared the good laddie for

death, though the doctor himself had told me that he had no chance of life." (2.)

"All the men went to the Sacraments when wounded. Even when all were in perfect health, I met only two who did not wish to receive the Sacraments. One of them stated that the first thing he would do if wounded would be to ask to see a priest." (9.)

"I was frequently struck by the evident pleasure the appearance of the priest gave the wounded man. Yes, I really think the men *wanted* the Sacraments when wounded." (4.)

"It is extremely rare that a Catholic refuses the Sacraments when wounded or in hospital." (Can. 1.)

"They 'always' want the Sacraments when wounded." (Can. 3.)

"The Catholics expect their chaplains to be with them in time of danger, though when wounded but few ask for the Sacraments. This can be accounted for by their great optimism, for be the wound ever so serious, they look upon it as a 'Blighty.' When asked, they never refuse the Sacraments." (Can. 4.)

"In a C.C.S.¹ not 1 per cent. refuse the Sacraments." (Can. 2.)

"The wounded are extraordinarily amenable, extremely grateful. Practically all respond." (Can. 9.)

"Never met an instance of a wounded man not wanting Sacraments." (10.)

¹ Casualty Clearing Station.

“ I have nothing but praise in the case of the wounded. The Church has taught them how to die happily: they want all the priest can give.” (12.)

“ Having charge of the R.C.s of a brigade during an attack, I see only the wounded at an advanced dressing station. Here I have been most struck by:

“(a) The childlike patience under pain. A man *thinks* of his mother or wife and is ready for acts of contrition.

“(b) The attitude of non-believing doctors. They called the Last Sacraments ‘ Faith Healing,’ and I was content to explain it on those terms. They remarked that my men ‘ came on to the table much more calm and resigned ’—‘ there is something in it.’ ”

“(c) Other chaplains (non-R.C.) here asked me what I did, and expressed regret that they were ‘ useless ’ in these critical moments.”

“(d) I never heard even a pardonable swear word from a wounded man. He seemed to be an innocent child once more.

“(e) The *effect* of Extreme Unction in consoling, calming, and strengthening the dying.

“(f) The ease with which an Act of Contrition could be taught to a non-Catholic dying.

“(g) The astounding faith of the Irish and their amazing *gentleness*. They apologise to doctors for trouble given and thank them. Most wounded men seldom get *out* of themselves so far.” (10.)

“ I was always in a forward area. When men seriously wounded, came through the divisional ambulances, they were dispatched to the C.C.S. immediately, or almost immediately after their wounds had been re-dressed. Those who came in in

a dying condition were either unconscious or suffering so much that they could hardly pull themselves together for real attention to Confession. But they were quite willing to accept what I could do for them." (29.)

"As regards the wounded, I simply asked them at once, and they were always ready to follow all I advised. I had three or four cases only of direct refusal." (26.)

"Undoubtedly the men *want* the Sacraments, and are delighted to see a priest when wounded. At a dressing station one often has to ask 'What is your religion?' or 'Are you a Catholic?' The poor fellows have already answered the orderly a whole string of questions. If the man is a Protestant, he will grunt out some answer, but, if a Catholic, his whole face will light up when he realizes a priest is speaking to him. (This applies also to the German prisoners. I remember one poor Boche seizing my hand, with kisses and tears, when he knew I was a priest.)

"I will never forget a strapping young Irishman, at a dressing station on the Somme. He beckoned to me with his eyes, and when I had absolved and anointed him (he had recently been to Confession, and I had scarcely matter for absolution), 'I am happy now,' he said, and he meant it. I don't know whether he died; but if ever a man was ready to quit the world at God's call, without a sigh or backward look, that splendid fellow was." (16.)

"What they do at the base, I don't know, but at the front men never ask for a priest when wounded. This is quite natural, because everybody is too busy to ask, and the wounded are passed

down the line quickly. It is the priest's business to be on the lookout for them, and they are always glad to see him. The process of being badly wounded, lying out some time, being carried perhaps miles through shell-fire to a dressing station, and finally a painful dressing, is enormously exhausting ; but a very brief Confession and Absolution, with other Sacraments, equally brief if necessary, is always welcomed : absolute essentials only. Protestants, too, are often touchingly grateful if you say a little Act of Contrition and Union with Christ crucified for them ; but some don't want it." (3.)

" The patients who were admitted to the C.C.S. were usually good." (31.)

" The wounded in the hospital I knew were all good. Not a slacker among them." (N.Z. 2.)

" Catholics long for the priest, and generally much deplore his absence if he is not for any reason there. I would say 80 per cent. of the men are so concerned. They generally ask for the priest when wounded." (Aus. 5.)

" I do not think it possible to overstate this. They want the priest and the Sacraments as much as men can want anything. With a priest handy, they will be contented, where without one they would be disaffected. They are pathetically glad to see one in hospitals, and they feel it very much if they are deprived of a chaplain. They may be a bit shy in first making themselves known, but I have found that where a priest has complained that the men were not glad to see him, the fault was probably in the priest himself ; one wonders, at times, if any one would be glad to claim

acquaintance with some foolish clerics of one's experience." (27.)

"The Sacraments are always welcomed by the wounded." (2.)

"Were men in danger of death eager for the Sacraments? My experience here is much more limited than that of priests who were in the clearing stations and hospitals further back. A badly wounded man was hurried backwards as soon as possible, and a priest with the infantry in the line did not see the majority of them at all. But so far as my experience does go, few asked for the Sacraments. I don't think they thought about it. They mumbled prayers as well as they could. The ignorance I have spoken of probably accounted for their not thinking of the Sacraments. But I found this: a badly wounded Catholic was always obviously pleased to see me, and was always quite ready for the Sacraments when I put the matter to him. They were amazingly easy to dispose for death." (35.)

"Catholic men, when wounded and dying, look for the priest, and eagerly desire the Sacraments. In the whole course of my experience I have only had two or three men who refused the Sacraments when dying, and I have attended thousands of men in the battlefield and in hospitals. Oftentimes their faith and piety are wonderful to behold. They make their confessions with great contrition, and are most grateful for the grace and consolation which the Sacraments bring.

One example out of many hundreds that I could write:

"I was called to a cellar in the line, which was being used as a medical aid post. A young soldier

had had his leg half torn away. It was necessary to amputate. When I got to the place, the surgeons were already operating. I gave conditional absolution, and waited, holding a candle for them to work by. After about three hours the young fellow came to. He was in dreadful agony, and I said a few words of sympathy. 'Are you a priest?' he said. 'Yes.' 'Well, Father, I am suffering terribly, but Jesus Christ suffered on the Cross far more than I am doing.' Then in a moment: 'I want to go to Confession and Holy Communion.' The Confession over, I hurried away to fetch the Blessed Sacrament, some miles away. I got back, and there, in that deep cellar, lying on a stretcher, that young soul received his Viaticum. Never a word of complaint on his lips, but just the holy names of Jesus and Mary, uttered in little gasping sobs, with wonderful devotion. An hour after he was dead." (24.)

"Most Catholic bed-patients in casualty clearing stations and base hospitals are glad to receive the Sacraments. The case is different with convalescent patients in England. It is difficult to get even the good ones among these to the Sacraments during their period of convalescence. They seem to feel that it is their time of holiday from every kind of duty, and say they will go when they get home on leave. It depends to a great extent on their families whether they do so or not.

"With regard to the wounded, the majority, say 80 per cent., are willing and even glad to receive the Sacraments when offered to them; a much smaller proportion, say 10 per cent. will ask of their own accord for the priest." (28.)

"[During nine months in this hospital of 400 beds] I have heard about 3000 confessions. About 1 in

200 only were hardened sinners, and refused to put themselves right. If I remember rightly, these men had not been to the Sacraments for years, and had been in the thick of the fight for two, three, or four years. Only about 1 in 80 would express a wish to go to Confession before I suggested it. They are usually not unwilling when the suggestion is made to them." (20.)

"I found, while working at the base hospitals, that what must be the remnant of slack Catholics went to their duties and made a new and genuine start in the practice of their religion, from the motive of gratitude to God for sparing their lives during the time shells were thick around them, when they were not ready to die. Four or five chaplains at this same base had similar experiences to recount, and few were the men registering themselves as R.C. who passed through the hospitals without going to Confession and Communion. In some cases men had twenty years of neglect to put right, and they had 'held out' against the motive of fear, surrendering when the danger was gone, out of gratitude for God's goodness towards them." (19.)

"[Of men in hospital, who had been long years away from the Sacraments], at least if they were seriously ill, I have never found one who was unwilling to make his confession to me." (18.)

"Here one had to be always ready. When business was on I slept on a stretcher in the receiving room itself, and got up whenever a car arrived or stretchers were brought in.

"When things got a bit slacker, I would go off and sleep, sometimes under a neighbouring tree, and leave my servant on the watch. Some welcome sleeps were often interrupted: 'Another

ambulance, Father; four stretcher cases.' Generally I got at the case before or as soon as the doctor, and if any danger, I got him spiritually dressed at once.

"The universal attitude of Tommy was simplicity, no fuss, humility, ready for the Sacraments, and not frightened by suggestion of Extreme Unction.

"Occasionally a man would ask if there was any chance of Holy Communion. It was generally impossible so far forward.

"The C.O. of my ambulance told the interpreter that he liked having a Catholic priest as ambulance padre. He was not R.C." (6.)

"I had no difficulty whatever to get a man to his duties when he was wounded and in bed at a C.C.S. In fact a wounded man would almost ask to go to Holy Communion." (8.)

"Some short experience in hospitals shows that men wounded and sick are glad to see a priest. Most Catholics will go to Confession before 'going over the top'; but not all will take much trouble to find an opportunity. . . . They do expect help from the priests, and I believe they want the Sacraments when wounded, though very seldom does one ask for a priest." (Can. 6.)

"It is astounding the way the men rely on their priests for help—large numbers of them. Few *ask* for the priest, but all *expect* him.

"In a casualty clearing station the priest is on the top of them at once: so they don't get a chance to ask. Very few refusals: these only from the lightly wounded, who say 'not now.'" (Aus. 2.)

“ In dressing stations or C.C.S., so few realize that they are dying that they don't ask. But they expect the priest to be about. No refusals from seriously wounded men.” (Aus. 3.)

“ At dressing stations and C.C.S. I was there as soon as they landed in. They were glad to see a priest and get the Sacraments.” (Aus. 4.)

“ I never found a man in danger of death who refused the Sacraments. . . . Some of the deaths in dressing stations, etc., were remarkably edifying—beautiful and inspiring to a degree.” (Aus. 5.)

CAPT. T.—“ In the dressing stations a non-Catholic doctor told me that he found that the first call of the wounded (Catholic) soldier was invariably for his priest, ‘ and that none could so soon comfort a man and put him at his ease.’ ”

A BATMAN.—“ In case of wounds there is usually a padre near a dressing station, and no man as a rule, except practically instantaneous death, dies without the Last Sacrament.

One might add a chapter to this book, called “ The Catholic Chaplain as seen by the Men.” Innumerable letters from the ranks speak with gratitude and pride of the work of the priests. The men show depression when there is not a priest within reach. To them a priest is a priest, instantly acceptable, even if (as frequently happens) they do not even know his name. He has no need to make his position or to establish his utility by material services. Yet when these are rendered they are duly appreciated, as thus :

PTE. D. Y.—“ I am glad you like the photograph, but am sorry to tell you that the church was blown down and the priest killed in the German advance of March 1918. I am sorry it happened, as I lost a very good friend in that priest, as he provided one or two of us with hot meals and woollen under-clothing, so you see you miss your friends when they are gone.”

The head of a well-known Red Cross Hospital writes :

“ I have had a hospital over three years, and have been immensely struck by the Catholic soldier. People who say, as I saw quoted in the *Daily Mail*, that there is ‘ no church on earth for which the average soldier has any use,’ do not speak the truth. The soldiers have every use for the Catholic Church, those who have been brought up to it. . . . No one who has been to church with the Catholic soldiers can doubt what I say. It isn’t that the other soldiers were not good fellows : I have the most charming remembrance of all the soldiers, and only felt sorry that all of them should not have enjoyed the comfort which the Catholic soldiers found. I had all sorts and classes of soldiers. They impressed me so greatly that I became a Catholic ; but this is of no sort of interest except that it proves how very convincing they were.”

Of the American Catholic soldiers their chaplains write :

“ Those who were dangerously ill were eager to receive the consolations of their religion, and in all my experience of eight months I know of only one case where the opportunity to cleanse the soul was refused. Those who were ill, but not seriously,

generally preferred to wait until they were out of hospital, and as I generally lost track of them then, I cannot say if the promise was fulfilled." (Fr. H.)

"They want Sacraments very badly when wounded, and do everything possible to get a priest." (Fr. M.)

The following letter, from a hospital chaplain in England, may here be inserted as it stands, though it covers the whole field of this report, and, indeed, goes somewhat beyond it :

". . . Experience of home hospitals differs from what is gained at or near the front, because the men's minds differ too. Violent pressures and their reactions are gone : memory, inactive at the front, is fusing experience. Hence direct answers to your questions is difficult ; but a general impression, easier.—Has war made men more accessible to the priest ? Of course : in hospitals they are at your mercy. In streets, trains, camps, etc., you can speak to soldiers as you cannot to a navvy, a clerk, or a tradesman. Civilians would have resented impertinence, or suspected a confidence trick.—But do they 'want' the priest or his ministry ? They are hurt if not visited in hospital : they always seem sociable, even genial ; Catholics display amazing docility when the Sacraments are mentioned. In a continuous experience of about three years in four or five large hospitals, one for officers, I have known only four or five men out of hundreds *refuse*, and then, from odd, fixed ideas.—'I can't, till I get back to Ireland' ; or, for practical reasons long unavowed : 'I was married in a Protestant church,' and so on. Yet this docility belongs in part to the general docility of a soldier towards any

sort of order, coming from officer, nurse, or superior generally. Similarly, lack of 'spontaneity,' so often commented on, in asking for the Sacraments, must be viewed within a *general* soldier-psychology. Where no order is given, there is little action. A certain vagueness, indecision, lack of initiative is visible throughout most soldiers' private lives.

"Also, they are tired; and again, removal of humanly disproportionate nervous pressures induces apathy. Much else that seems religiously or irreligiously significant, should be viewed organically with the rest of a man's mentality. Thus, I have never worried about 'fatalistic' expressions. You easily see what lies behind them, and it is little enough. No one means anything by them; they are not thought out; often, they are just a way of bluffing yourself out of 'wind up.' They are like expressions suggesting that a man 'snuffs out' entirely when killed. "If my number's up, it's up.' 'Have a good leave; you may be killed next day'—the views suggested by such words *co-exist* with ulterior beliefs, and may be *felt* more strongly, and yet *be* less real. A man's mind easily harbours, simultaneously, contradictions, though probably on slightly or quite different planes. Difficulties, again, are rarely on the faith level: they are practical puzzles.—'Is the Pope pro-German?' 'Do priests really lead good lives?' 'How does it hurt a man to go with a woman if he's unmarried? It's natural!'—These don't interfere with belief in the Pope, trust in priests, and recognition of sin. So for medals, etc. (rosaries are a little different: you can, though you needn't, *use* a rosary.) Men neither deliberately use nor refrain from using them as mascots. They just *like having them*, vaguely associating them with holy and powerful things—God, in the long run. Yet this

they couldn't do with, say, a 'teddy bear,' or a chance fetish, like a favourite button. Therefore, 'are men well instructed?' Perhaps not, if you mean 'can they reply articulately to questions?' Questions are often unwise: you have to *feel*, without them, how far the back of the man's mind is Catholic: inarticulateness may mean as little as glib formula. Even 'clear ideas' about religion do not vary directly with the amount of religion. The English mind does not appropriate, retain, or like clear ideas. Many clear ideas on one plane often knock up against contradictory clear ideas on another, and in practice cancel, though they shouldn't. Often, the hardest cases are the men with more knowledge than the average of their religion.—The Catholic religion seems to be appreciated, or sought, owing to its obvious uniqueness (judged by examples); or because it is 'the old one'; or definite; or human; or spiritual; especially the last two combined. Merely social, genial, naturalistic 'religion' is at once recognized as irreligious. Yet the official English religion, as normally represented, is equally recognized as having nothing to do with real life. Hence in 'conversations' and 'sermons' I find human sympathy, and any direct appeal to the supernatural, such as vicarious suffering, or 'having Christ in you,' are at once efficacious. Hence, too, Catholics come readily to Mass when there is no obligation, ecclesiastical or military. Hence, again, sexual sin, though yielded to, is *judged* supernaturally. Many Catholics sin; I have met many quite innocent Protestants; but the motives for *repentance* among the former seem to me spiritually, and allowing for exceptions on both sides, to outweigh those which issue into self-control in the latter. Therefore Army life has done little more than to

accelerate the trend of ordinary life, or provide opportunity for revealing the real, latent character. Genuine deterioration shows itself, though, in girls. At home, *they* make the running, and seem almost unforgivable. An American (not a Catholic) said to a friend of mine: "Your girls are good sports: ours wouldn't let us, etc., etc., like all yours seem to be ready to. With us, it's 'professionals' or 'hands off.' Yet even here, *war opportunity* has, on the whole, revealed an *antecedent* evaporation of all principles, in this country at any rate.—I would rather not argue for instances: everything happens sometimes, somewhere. I have found amazing and humbling sanctity: many real conversions, many examples of superb innocence, either easy, or due to heroic effort.—Difficulties have been created, not by the vaguely religious or irreligious officer or official—these are excellent as a rule; but by the Christian Scientist, the Theosophist, especially the Ritualist.—But I would emphasize that in many ways the men are more satisfactory than the officers (except the later lot who have worked up from the ranks, and even, often, than these). Almost in proportion as a man has received an expensive (Catholic) education, he knows less than he (relatively) should, about his religion, and is less apostolic. Have I ever known a Catholic officer hunt out and bring up other Catholic officers? Very rarely. Among the men, that is constant. 'There's three more R.C.s in the ward, Father, and two of them ain't been to church since they was kids, and the corporal over there, he daren't speak to you.' The corporal blushes, grins, has his head smacked, and goes to Confession. Officers, however, never guessed their own numbers till they—all separately solicited—met at some Mass, and all went to Communion, and often made friends on the

strength of it. This is due to many natural causes ; but often because their schooling has indeed supplied them with instincts, yet, with little enough of the private's dull obstinacy, and not with *personal ideas*. Their religious mind has never developed in connection with any of their after school developments, nor have they received principles or interests which should make it do so. After establishing personal and very friendly relations (which often takes very long), officers will practically ask for a complete instruction. And *their* ' puzzles ' are serious. On the whole, then, the effect of the war has been to liberate, or accentuate, what a man really has in him ; rarely to create anything new. Also, it has broken the crust of the soul : left to himself, thus exposed, soft and naked, to the almost wholly unfavourable surroundings, he suffers : if he meets good influences he is unusually susceptible of indefinite improvement. I would like to add that I notice at once, even in the least satisfactory Catholic (unless he has *quite* lost his faith), an element which is quite lacking even in ' good ' Protestants. It is some sort of supernatural grace, rudimentary at least. Theologically, I shouldn't know how to define it : but it is immediately discernible.

" Please read this, dear Rev. Father, with all necessary qualifications."

CHAPTER VII

FACING A DEATH SENTENCE

“ HAVE you ever prepared a man to undergo a death sentence? Did you find him responsive to religion in the hours preceding execution? ”

“ I have prepared two men for death: both bad men who died holy deaths. In both cases I had seen the men in prison before the sentence was known: I had offered Confession, but not pressed it, and in neither case had they wanted it.

“ Before dying, they both told me they were very happy, having been to Confession and received Holy Communion. They forgave everybody, thanked God for the chance of such a well-prepared death, and promised to pray for me in Heaven. In both cases I spent the night with them, and was with them to the end.

“ I describe the last case.

“ I came down from the line. I saw the condemned man in a tent for a few minutes, and told him I would come when he had had his dinner. Came about eight. Talked to him till about nine, when I heard his confession. His two guards and four of the shooting party were Catholics. I heard his confession, and then we all went into the tent. There we said some prayers together, and I gave them all Holy Communion. They then went out, and after more conversation I advised him to go to sleep: he slept almost at once, and soundly till dawn. I slept a little, but was more

distressed than he was. At dawn the sergeant put in his head, and told me they would soon be ready. I woke him, we said some prayers, and I gave him the Last Blessing. He was perfectly calm, and praying to Our Lady and the Sacred Heart.

"The sergeant then told me they were ready. I went outside and told them to come in, and I stood by the man while they blindfolded him and put a white mark over his heart for the shooting party to aim at. I gave him my blessing, and he went out.

"The other case was almost exactly the same, and both men died in perfect dispositions." (17.)

"I attended four prisoners once, two of whom were expecting a death sentence. They showed contrition, and served my Mass, receiving Holy Communion." (25.)

"Yes, I prepared one young soldier who prepared for death in a most perfect way, and met death with the most unfaltering courage. It made a very deep impression on all who saw it." (14.)

"N. had been sentenced to death, but, as sentence had not been promulgated, he was not aware of the fact. I had a suspicion that the man might possibly have been a Catholic, despite the fact that he was shown on the nominal roll as something else. The chaplain (non-Catholic) who was attending the prisoner very kindly consented to my going with him to the guard room. In the presence of the minister I asked the prisoner, did he want to see a Catholic priest? He said, no. I told him that if ever he should desire to see me he need only tell the minister, who would fetch me at once.

"When sentence was promulgated, *i.e.* twelve hours before death, the minister visited him, and

the man asked at once that a Catholic priest might come to see him.

“ He was baptised conditionally at 6 p.m. I spent the night in the cell, and said Mass at 3 a.m., the condemned man and four of his guard receiving Holy Communion.

“ We walked 150 yards from the guard room to the place of execution, the prisoner praying with me in a firm, distinct voice. He never quivered even while they were tying him to the post. I stood aside about five yards, and suggested aspirations, which he repeated. The Holy Name was on his lips when the party fired. I stepped in at once and anointed. While doing so, I heard the officer in charge, who stood behind me, say: ‘ Good God, yours is the religion to die in.’ ” (13.)

“ On two occasions I have prepared men for death, and have stood by them during the execution. Their offence was not a civil crime, but one against discipline—desertion. They were good boys, and accepted their death as coming direct from the hand of God. I only hope to have their courage, contrition, faith, and confidence in God when my turn comes to appear before the Judgment Seat.” (Can. 4.)

“ Yes. . . . A devil became an archangel.” (5.)

“ Yes, two men: and both received the Sacraments most devoutly.” (9.)

“ Fathers F., C. and G. attended at least one each. The boys died most holy deaths.” (7.)

“ Yes, once. It was a curious case, in a way an astounding one. I arrived back from leave just in time to look after him. Immediately after the

sentence had been promulgated in his presence, I was told he had asked for a Catholic priest, and being in my brigade I was naturally the one to be sent for. I must admit I had never seen him before, due no doubt in great part to his rather long list of serious crimes in the Army and subsequent detention. His final and crowning crime was desertion whilst going up to the trenches, but not from fear, of this I am convinced. I had no difficulty whatever with him; he did all that I wanted. The poor fellow knew practically nothing about his religion. I heard his confession, said Mass, and gave him Holy Communion in his cell on the morning of his execution. I accompanied him in the van on the way to execution. He asked for a cigarette, and began singing sentimental songs. I kept breaking into these with ejaculations, invocations, acts of contrition. He would immediately stop singing, repeat these after me, and when I stopped for a bit, resume his singing. He did not exhibit the slightest exterior sign of fear. When leaving the van for the chair of execution, he did not want to be led, although his eyes were bandaged. He offered no resistance whatever, no remark when being bound to the chair. He was really like a lamb being led to the slaughter. In fact to me he was incomprehensible. He admitted to me he deserved his punishment. He had lost his mother when quite young, and from his father, he said, he got more kicks than half-pence. He had not much of a chance in life." (29.)

"I prepared one. He was a lad from a London parish, had attended a Catholic school, and had come under the influence of nuns. He was sentenced for desertion, a second offence. . . . His nerves were in such a condition that a few nights

before the execution, when a Boche plane flew over the camp where he was under arrest, he yelled for fright. I had heard nothing of the case until the evening before his sentence was to be executed. A senior C. of E. chaplain had been visiting him for a fortnight, and had not mentioned religion until that evening: then at once the lad asked for me, saying that he was a Catholic. The chaplain borrowed a car and ran out for me, for I was stationed some miles away. The lad was in such a state that everyone expected an absolute breakdown. Moreover, the boy—he was about twenty years of age—persisted in hoping for a reprieve.

“I heard his confession, gave him Holy Communion, recited the Rosary and the Prayers for the Dying with him, put before him the Catholic view of death, and entreated him to offer his life for the cessation of the miseries of war, etc. After the first few tears, he was absolutely calm, and answered all the prayers most devoutly.

I stayed with him through the night, and he slept through it all. I awoke him in the morning. Said the Rosary with him again, and told him to keep the beads in his hands when the guard came for him, and to say *Hail Marys* to the last. As he was led away I saw the Rosary in his manacled hands behind his back. Ten minutes later I buried him. Within half an hour I was saying Mass for his eternal rest. *R.I.P.*

“Everyone marvelled at the wonderful change which had come over him, and at the quiet courage with which he faced his end.” (16.)

CHAPTER VIII

CATHOLIC OFFICERS : AS SEEN BY THE CHAPLAIN

“ IN what way did you find officers . . . helpful to you in your ministry ? ”

The attitude of non-Catholic officers towards the Catholic chaplains does not come within the scope of this report. But many of the chaplains bear testimony to the willingness of the military authorities to facilitate their work, and to the courtesy and consideration which they have met with from their brother officers.

Of the Catholic officers our chaplains write as follows :

“ A real ‘ dyed in the wool ’ Catholic officer or nurse is invaluable.

“ ‘ Quand le Capitaine X. est parti nous avons perdu notre Père, ’ said a French-Canadian soldier of his Irish-Canadian officer.

“ But many officers and N.C.O.s are timid because of their official position. They are personally good enough, but officially *nil*.

“ One or two Catholic officers got *all* their men to Confession and Communion by their words and example.” (Can. 3.)

“ I had three very fine Catholic officers in a brigade of artillery that I lived with for some time.

. . . Their example was a great help to the men.”
(38.)

“ The Catholic officer (of all ranks) is notable for his strict adherence to religious principle. He hears Mass, and brings his men with him. He goes frequently to the Sacraments. He reverences the priest (how often have officers volunteered gladly to serve my Mass) without in any way making a parade of his religion : he practises it faithfully without any human respect.

“ An example of this :

“ I was riding, late one evening in 1915, past a little village just behind the lines, when a voice hailed me : ‘ Are you by any chance a Catholic priest ? ’ I followed up and dismounted, and found myself face to face with Colonel X. of the Grenadier Guards. ‘ Father,’ he said, ‘ we have, none of us, made our Easter duties, and we go into the trenches to-night.’

“ Having made arrangements to hear their confessions in a little church near at hand, the Colonel took me into the mess, gave orders to the company commanders that all Catholics were to be paraded at once, and said that he himself would take them to the church for Confession and Communion. With the Colonel at their head, all the Catholics of the battalion received Holy Communion that night.” (24.)

“ Some Catholic officers were useful (but not all), especially if they happened to be company commanders, in seeing that the Catholics of their company got to church, or in making them turn up to Confession.” (29.)

“ A good Catholic officer is a great help. He sees that the men are paraded to Mass whenever

possible ; if the chaplain is out of reach, he himself will find out the time of Mass at the French church, and take the men there. Often a Catholic officer will collect the men and bring them to church for the Sacraments, first giving them a good example by going to Confession himself.

“ Most of my Catholic officers practised their religion ; some of the quite young ones were inclined to be careless.” (28.)

“ I had eighteen months’ experience of officers’ hospital work at the base, and I approached the responsibility with some misgiving : but I found that the officer can be dealt with as simply about religious matters, and is as responsive as the less educated Tommy. The hospital was a big hotel, and the wards were small bedrooms, with the beds close together, and Confession would have been a hard affair for a man who was self-conscious, or affected by human respect. I found, in the course of eighteen months, that only about half-a-dozen officers, when offered the chance of Confession and Communion, said they preferred to wait till they got up and about, or were transferred to England. The others made their confessions in a whisper, as they do in a Confessional, and seemed to care nothing for there being two or three Protestants sharing the room with them when at their devotions.” (19.)

“ My experience of Catholic officers was very consoling, and it bore testimony to the solid results that are visible, in time of stress, as directly springing from a good Catholic education.

“ Officers led their men in religious practices as they did when they went ‘ over the top.’ I had only a few Catholic officers in the division I worked with, but they never failed me. They came for Confession with parties of their men, whom they

had zealously shepherded to the Sacraments, and were the first to go down by the roadside on their knees for Confession.

“ The duty (often self-imposed) of marching their men to Mass was evidently one that they appreciated and with them the ‘ church parade ’ was not a ‘ bore ’ or ‘ nuisance, ’ as it is to so many young officers whose junior rank condemns them to tasks for which nobody is likely to volunteer.” (19.)

“ Catholic officers help me :

“ 1. By example. (I have only known one bad R.C. officer, and he was killed without having been to his duties.)

“ 2. By knowing the Catholics in small units, where there are no parades, and seeing that they are free to come to Mass.

“ 3. By giving me breakfast after Mass (and letting my dog come into the Mess).

“ 4. By finding me and letting me know where they and their men are.” (17.)

“ Catholic ‘ temporary ’ officers were generally most helpful, coming themselves, and bringing the men even from neighbouring units as well as their own. So were numbers of N.C.O.s.” (15.)

“ I have had very few Catholic officers in my units. Of these, two or three were splendid, got the boys together for Confession or Benediction or Mass, loved to serve Mass. They made one’s work a real joy. The others were, on the whole, good, practical Catholics, but stopped there : no help to the priest.” (7.)

“ Some Catholic officers were very zealous at getting their men to Mass.” (3.)

“Catholic officers were either very good or absolutely careless and indifferent.” (N.Z. 2.)

“Catholic officers are of the greatest help in all our spiritual work.” (Can. 1.)

“Catholic officers not as good as Catholic men. They are more subject to human respect. Nor have I found them very earnest in getting men for parades.” (Aus. 2.)

“The Catholic officers are as good as the men in private religious practice, but I have received nothing in the way of special assistance from them.” (Aus. 3.)

“Catholic officers a help to the chaplain. Exceptions were rare. All those in my brigade went to their duties. A number of them *helped* me—brought boys to Confession, etc.” (Aus. 4.)

“Generally good.” (Aus. 5.)

A chaplain (18) gives some instances :

“A certain Lieut.-Commander, R.N., for some time commanding a camp of naval guns on the Nieuport front . . . every Sunday used to get Mass for his men somehow or other. He used to lead them out to a ruined house, where he got some French aumonier to say the Mass . . . [At Easter] I stopped the night at his camp, about a mile and a half from the trenches, and the next morning every one of his Catholic men made their Easter Communion, with himself, who served the Mass. This visit I often repeated with similar results.

“The camps and batteries of this group of siege guns were scattered over an area of several miles, but when I said Mass at Captain H.’s camp, he

insisted on every individual man being sent up to the Mass, no matter what work his local C.C. wanted him for. In the morning Captain H. led the men round to my cabin to go to Confession. . . . He knelt on the floor in the middle of the men, and went to Communion with them.

“ One Sunday I arranged to say my second Mass at an aerodrome, where three squadrons sent their Catholics to me. . . . Nearly all went to Confession and Communion. Afterwards, when the officers were taking me off to breakfast, one said he was so glad at the result, and another burst out, ‘ I was jolly glad to get to Confession.’

“ A pilot, who was a weekly communicant, turned up at Mass in the town at half past nine one Sunday morning. He had been flying at night, and had got home at 4 a.m. Then while the whole squadron were still asleep, he had got up and walked nearly three miles in the rain to Mass.”

Innumerable other examples of the same kind could be quoted, but they would swell this volume to an inordinate length. A careful perusal of the various Catholic College magazines issued during the war, reveals, in letters from officer *alumni* and in obituary notices, a vast amount of genuine Catholic spirit.

CHAPTER IX

THE PRIEST AND HIS MEN

“ HAS the war made men more accessible to the priest ? ”

As regards exterior barriers between priest and men, army organization appears to act in two opposite ways, as the chaplains indicate. On the one hand it enables the priest to reach men whom he could scarcely have reached otherwise. On the other it often cuts him off for long periods from those who need and would welcome his help.

Similarly as regards interior barriers—human respect, shyness, and the like. Common interests, common tasks, and common dangers bring priest and men together ; yet lack of privacy, the dulling pressure of army routine, the constant presence of the unreligious if not the irreligious (and some, though not all, would add, the official rank and ambiguous uniform of the chaplain), may create an aloofness normally absent from civil life.

On the whole, it may be said that the relations between the men and the priest are marked by a strikingly cordial understanding. They can get to business at once.

Yet many chaplains report a disappointing lack of spontaneity among the men (excepting always

the Americans, and to a lesser degree the Irish and the Northerners) in asking for the Sacraments or discovering the time and place of Mass. One chaplain speaks of "the impressive bovinity of the faithful."

"Our boys are generally glad to see the priest, and show no signs of 'human respect,' *e.g.* I always give the Sacraments without screens, the patients readily consenting when asked. The other patients invariably show respect, and watch with interest, especially when I am anointing the sick." (2.)

"The priest is always regarded as a friend by the men, and though they show him the marks of respect due to an officer, they have no hesitation about coming to him when they have a difficulty." (9.)

"Yes, meet everywhere." (5.)

"Yes, especially if the priest is friendly, and not 'parsonic.' To be an 'officer' or fussy about rank, etc., is resented and despised." (Can. 3.)

"My experience has been that it has not made them more accessible to the priest, and that not through their fault or the priest's, but because of the general organization of the Army, and the religious indifference pervading it. The chaplain has to 'look them up' and this, in addition to the journeys it entails, is often a severe trial to him and them. A murmur may go round the horse lines or billet that the 'R.C. Parson' is coming, and the R.C.s who happen to be present need tremendous grit to face the rough banter that goes on. Some face it out and come to see the priest: some do not, and I must say they have my fullest sympathy.

Once with the priest, all difficulty fades away. They call him 'Father,' and chat and talk about home, troubles, Mass, etc., with refreshing candour." (7.)

"All fighting a common foe and living a common life creates a spirit of brotherhood that facilitates communication between the priest and the soldiers. One class of boys frequently visits the chaplain. There is another type you never see, except when they are in trouble or short of funds." (Can. 4.)

"Rather it has shown the accessibility of the priest as such. The officer's uniform was a real barrier (perhaps quite necessary for other reasons), but once the ice was broken, men seemed to talk to the chaplain as if he was in some way identified in their minds with their own priest at home. (It is curious how Protestants have this same idea of the Catholic priesthood: they welcome you for the sake of some other R.C. priest they have known, and look on you as his twin brother.) I think men are always accessible to anybody who will talk to them as if they were men, and not children or women, and the war has made no difference to this." (3.)

"I may say in general that the Catholics always came forward to see me. I used to run from lorry to lorry by the roadside, or go up to any cluster of men I could come across, or again in the wards or tents of the hospital, and ask: 'Any R.C.s here?' They always answered and came to see me and confess on the spot—many had not been for very many years. In fact my experience tends to show that the British Catholic soldiers will respond to a personal appeal, though he is, or seems to be, unable to find out for himself with very many exceptions

as a rule. I never found notices to be of much value. Very few indeed resisted a talk to settle things." (25.)

"It is certainly a distinct mark of Catholics to want to have the priest living with them, so that they may have what religion can give when they want it." (27.)

"I should say it has made the priest more accessible to the men. A few of the chaplains had too much of the officer about them, but that was not general. Except for the Lancashire Companies, I have not found that there was much spontaneity among the lads." (31.)

"The Army chaplain, in virtue of his position as an officer, set apart to look after the interests of religion, was facilitated in his work of approaching the men, who by no means took it amiss if he spoke to them about their duties: they were rather apologetic than otherwise." (29.)

"I found the men always very accessible. Authorities smoothed the way to bring the priest in contact with them. The men themselves helped considerably to make the priest known to each man. There was some difficulty in finding individuals, owing to 'fatigues,' but a meeting could be arranged fairly easily." (26.)

"Yes, and *vice versa*." (Can. 2.)

"I think the war has made men more accessible to the priest. When he goes into the line and shares their dangers, they feel proud of his action, boast of it to their non-Catholic chums, and are very glad to be recognized by him.

“ Non-Catholic men, who often have had weird prejudices against priests, find the R.C. chaplain to be a ‘ good sort,’ and are exceedingly kind to him.” (13.)

“ Undoubtedly. The priest is ever welcome, especially in the trenches and on the fighting front everywhere, by both Protestants and Catholics alike.” (14.)

“ The men always seem genuinely glad to see a priest.” (16.)

“ Accessible to priest ? Neither more nor less. The priest being an officer makes no difference. He is ‘ Father,’ not ‘ Sir,’—and that even with many Protestant men. Catholics’ familiarity and instant friendship with a new priest is a standing marvel to Protestants. Protestant chaplains envy us that immediate *rapproch*—the result of faith on both sides.” (17.)

“ I think men have realized that a priest is a man who is to help them along in their weary toil, and that in him they can always find a friend ; and so some of them have always made it a point to find the priest as soon as ever they could, just to have a chat with him, and especially if he happened to know where they came from.” (8.)

“ They were always glad to see the priest, and on the contrary very disconsolate when they had been neglected for any length of time.” (23.)

“ Certainly [the war has made men more accessible to the priest], in so far as it has created comradeship. The occasions for this have been multiplied.” (37.)

“Every Catholic, however poorly instructed, knows that the priest can do something real for him.” (N.Z. 1.)

“Our men in Australia are always accessible to the priest, and the war certainly made them more so.” (Aus. 5.)

“The war has certainly made the men more accessible to the Priest. The opportunity of meeting ‘men only’ in such large numbers would hardly have been possible under other conditions.” (Can. 5.)

“I think the men are just accessible to the priest out here as in civil life. They do not expect the priest to be a society entertainer or a vendor of buns or cigarettes. The fact of a priest being an officer in no way puts a barrier between him and the Catholic men. To them he is not Captain A. or Major B., but just ‘the priest.’ They never address the priest as ‘Padre,’ but by the English title, ‘Father.’” (27.)

“In my opinion the war has made men more accessible to the priest than they were previously in civil life. This is especially the case in hospitals and in the trenches, when men can be spoken to individually. It is more difficult when the men are in billets, because there are nearly always a large number together, the majority of whom will be Protestants.

“Most Catholic chaplains visit their men regularly in billets, and the men like it. The good Catholics will often inform the priest about the slack ones, and help him to find them.

“It requires a certain amount of moral courage to go looking for Catholic men in a billet full of

Protestants. Priests who are very shy or timid in temperament find this the hardest part of their work. It needs to be done tactfully, so that the Catholics are not made to feel awkward before their Protestant companions.

“On the other hand, the time during which the men can be visited, apart from hospital and the trenches, is very short. I found the only good time to be the half-hour or three quarters after the men’s teas, after which they are out of their billets for the rest of the evening. . . .

“The average Catholic soldier expects to be visited by his priest while in billets, and also occasionally on the line. He is gratified to see the priest in places of danger, partly because of the impression made on his Protestant companions.” (28.)

“In some respects men are more accessible, but the officer’s uniform is somewhat of a barrier.” (Can. 6.)

A BATMAN.—“I have never yet met a soldier who resented meeting a priest, and quite a number make him a confidant as well as a confessor.”

LIEUT. B. C. (London Regt.).—“Yes, I do believe that the war has made men more accessible to the priest. The priest who has seen war in France can do much for the Church, and drive the faith hard in.”

And of the Americans :

“Speaking from personal observation, I think that the war has brought the men closer to their priests. It has shown them that he is their friend at all times, and is ever ready to listen to them, and moreover, he is generally a good companion.

Naturally too, it has made the men more accessible from the priest's standpoint, for he is with them and can keep track of them better than were they scattered throughout a city parish." (Fr. H.)

"Men, during the war, go to the priest with utmost confidence. They look up to him and love him. He is the most popular man in the regiment." (Fr. M.)

"Because of the Army many men have come in more frequent contact with the priest than they ever did before since they left the parochial schools. Because he can make himself one of their company so easily, they seem more willing to meet and chat with the priest in the Army than with the priest in their own home city or town. For a few months I attended an artillery brigade which had no Catholic chaplain. There were a great many Catholics of Irish, German, Polish, and French extraction, principally from Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, and Buffalo. Among these were a number who had not been to the Sacraments, nor even to Mass, for several years. I was able to induce almost all of these to attend the Mass quite regularly, which I celebrated every Sunday in a Y.M.C.A. building, and to go to Confession and Holy Communion at least once during this time. This was not at all so much because the men had any fear of the war—we were in an American training camp then—or because they expected to be called to France shortly, as it was because the priest was able to go among them, and pass more or less as a soldier and a man of their own type and class, and could, by the exercise of a very little tact and through a few kind words, win them over to his own views and wishes. This is all the more remarkable because anything that savours in the

least of compulsion or coercion in religious matters is absolutely forbidden and prohibited in the American Army. The men may attend any religious service they like, or they may abstain from all of them." (Fr. M. H.)

An English chaplain writes :

"The American soldiers, beyond all others, are accessible to the priest. They do not wait to be 'hunted up' and have no shyness." (34.)

CHAPTER X

GENERAL EFFECTS OF THE WAR ON CATHOLIC SOLDIERS

“WHAT difference has the war made in the moral and religious character of men?”

Of the permanent effects of the war on character it is too soon to judge. The opinions of the parish priests of returned soldiers differ considerably as to how far the men are improved or otherwise by their experience.

We have already seen in Chapter IV how, in the opinion of most of the chaplains who have reported, the moral standard of the men does not seem to be permanently lowered: and this judgment, based, no doubt, on the power of moral recovery which they have observed, is reassuring so far as it goes. We must also allow for the fact that circumstances at home are still very unsettled, and many of the men can hardly be said to have returned to normal life. In spite of the emphatic assertion of one highly-respected chaplain, that “war does *no* good which cannot be done tenfold without it,” the general opinion seems to be that, as a rule, good men have been made better, and many careless Catholics at least temporarily reclaimed.

“ I think the experience our Catholic men have been through, though it *may* be the ruin of a few, will for the most part have a most excellent effect. They realize better now how well they have been taught. They found they had no reason to be shy of their religion. Above all they have faced death, and found their priest by their side in the hour of danger.” (22.)

“ The general effect of the war on the Catholic soldiers was distinctly good, but obviously we don't know whether the effect is to be permanent.” (23.)

“ I should say that generally, the effect of the war was to increase the faith of the men and their appreciation of the benefits of their religion.” (27.)

“ I am not of opinion that the general moral standard will be lowered. Many of the men who had been away from Confession and Holy Communion for many years were reclaimed in the Army, and all those who had practised regularly found means to continue to do so. Among the younger lads there will probably be an earlier acquaintance with sexual sin—but there need not have been.” (31.)

“ The general maxim driven into my soul—War is *no* good—does no good which cannot be done tenfold without it. Its spiritual influence taken broadly is bad.” (10.)

“ Not much difference. Their *hearts* are good but *heads* too empty. No reasoned faith or practical apologetics except among converts.” (Can. 3.)

“ On the whole I consider the war has not made the men worse, but certainly not better, there being

exceptions, of course. It seems to me that the men do not value religion more, nor think nor talk of it. The fact of the men being in hospital has brought the priest to them, and their being sick has been a grace to them. I have brought very many slack Catholics back again." (20.)

" Catholics came to the war with a good working religion, with faith and instruction and a clear and definite rule of Christian life, and they can be shown to have stood the test, the supreme test of war and the awful temptations of a soldier's life in foreign towns. But the vast majority of the rest have had no real religion at all to help them." (18.)

" *As a rule* I have found that the faith of the Catholic soldiers is affected by the war thus :

" A *solid, practical* Catholic before the war became a very earnest one during it. The three great truths, Death, Hell, and Heaven, which were not obtrusive in their pre-war lives, but were kept in reserve almost unconsciously, came very much to the fore amid war surroundings, which perpetually suggested them.

" But the *habitually neglectful* Catholic in peace time did not improve at the front. I have met such men sick in the field ambulance hospitals, and in full health up at the guns, etc., and with all the patience and tact I could use they did not respond.

" Between these two classes there is another of *neglected* Catholics, *i.e.*, men who are the fruit of mixed marriages, or who had careless parents, or who, owing to their un-Christian surroundings, *drifted* rather than went wrong. Several such have come across me, and were only too pleased to make

their *first* Confession and Communion before returning to the front line." ¹ (7.)

"Those who were good at home are invariably good here. Those who were careless in former days, now in the majority of cases approach the Sacraments. While, on the other hand, few, if any, of those who lost the faith before they enlisted have returned to the fold." (Can. 4.)

"I am firmly convinced that no Catholic man has become weaker in his faith since he has been to the war. On the contrary, many who were careless before have been improved by their trials during the war, and numbers of them, in spite of all that we hear about the social evil, have led and lead spotless lives in the matter of purity." (9.)

"I think the war would leave many with a fuller sense of the reality of their religion." (38.)

"I think that the war has deepened the moral and religious character of the Catholic soldiers, and intensified their appreciation of religion." (7.)

"I cannot speak for the line, but down here (base) the war has not made much change in men. As was said of old to Dives: 'If they believe not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they believe if one were to rise from the dead.'

"On the whole, it is quite plain to see that Catholic men here have always been much more eager to go to Mass, etc., than other men have been to go to their religious services. Non-Catholics have remarked as much to me. But this is not the result of the war, in my opinion. The war has merely shown up what was there already.

¹ For examples of the return of these "neglected" Catholics see the chapter on Religious Knowledge.

“ Men engaged in actual fighting seemed to me to be of a much better moral than those of labour companies, and consequently better Catholics.

“ From what I have seen out there I am inclined to think that the average man's faith has not been much affected by the war. The vast majority of men had no faith to start with, and have never acquired any since. The case of Catholics is different. If they were practising Catholics before the war, they became even better out here: if they were slack before the war, and had not frequented the Sacraments, they remained indifferent in the time of bombardments. Of course of the latter class I have met exceptions, who returned to the Sacraments after long years of absence.” (18.)

“ The prevalence of filthy conversation does not seem to have lowered the moral tone of Catholic soldiers, nor do the occasional lapses of some seem to have permanently lowered their ideals. There was evidence of the most whole-hearted repentance of these isolated falls, and a very touching humility in self-accusation, which argued to a real resolution to do better.” (19.)

“ As far as I can see, little difference ” [in the moral and religious character of the men]. (10.)

“ Generally speaking, I do not think that Catholic soldiers will benefit by their war experience except in that it will make them more broad minded as to local usages and general administration. It will make them realize better the universality of the Church, and bring them into touch with the Church abroad.

“ So far as faith is concerned, if anything it will be confirmed. But as for practice, it will be weakened.

They have been in countries where people were Catholics in name only. They have been so circumstanced for so long that they have not been able to practise their religious duties regularly, and have in consequence come to regard the obligation as less binding : and there is a great danger that they will retain the same tendency at home.

“ The same applies also to their moral standard. Army life and discipline practically discounts morality, and so, unfortunately, many have fallen, and are likely to have a less serious idea of sin in the future. There is too much of the idea that so long as you are not found out you are all right.

“ Still, on the other hand, it must be said that the way different people were affected depended on their previous religious training. Those from the north of England were easily distinguishable by their efforts to practise their religion. Many retained all their zeal for the faith, and did much to encourage the backward ones ; and even when they fell away for a time, it only needed a word from the chaplain to recall them to their religious duties, and to regularity in them. But others from the south, and where there is little real Catholic atmosphere, hardly responded at all, and, even when more or less forced to come, gave little consolation to the chaplain.

“ The class which is the least satisfactory of all is the “ serving soldier.” He seems to have no idea of religion at all, whether he be officer or private. Most of them never came to Mass, and when they were persuaded to make their Easter Communion, it was discovered that it was very many years before the war since they had been last.

“ But one thing one must say of all Catholic soldiers is that they are always glad to have the

Sacraments at the end. Very few resent the efforts of the Catholic chaplain on their behalf." (15.)

"The moral and religious character of men has, I think, undergone no great change. Men came to the war, pushed to it by the sense of duty, all the time hoping to return home as soon as possible. Very few really took to Army life. They did so only in so far as they thought themselves morally or sometimes physically bound." (31.)

"It is hard to say whether our Catholic soldiers value their religion more as a result of the war. That some do is an undoubted fact. So far as my experience goes this was observable in those who were before the war really good Catholics, or whose education had been given them in secondary schools or still higher schools. I cannot say I noticed the same in Catholics of a lower standard of education, except perhaps in those who came from very good, pious families. They may think of their religion, but I doubt whether they talk much about it: their surroundings are too unfavourable: almost heroic conquering of human respect would be required." (29.)

"A number of times men have said to me in Confession, 'Father, this war has been a lesson to me. I'll be a different man after it.' I have heard non-Catholics express the same sentiment.

"But I fear that in the majority of cases the effect is not lasting. Some men are genuinely and permanently converted. Others will continue to practise their religion so long as a priest or some good friend keeps in touch with them, and stimulates them from time to time. But the majority, when they return to their old surroundings, become careless again. . . .

“ I think most priests would say that life in the Army, whether at the base or at the front, has not been good for the religion of our men. Many, who, when living with their families, were practising Catholics of a mediocre kind, have become habitually neglectful. The irregularity of the life, the constant living with non-Catholic companions, the severe temptations to sins of the flesh, the impossibility of regular religious practices, the sights of the battlefield, the unnaturalness of a life devoted to killing and destruction, all tend to produce the same effect.

“ On the other hand, those who remain faithful, even if for a time their zeal be dulled, must surely emerge the stronger. Any man who, while living for months as a soldier at the front, has continued to pray and to keep God's commandments without shirking or grievous fall, may be said to have proved himself as gold in the furnace.” (28.)

“ The war has made no permanent impression on the religion of the Catholic soldier.” (Aus. 2.)

“ The war has not bettered the religion of Catholics. It has had the effect of bringing a considerable number who had previously been negligent into touch with priests. In future it will be much easier for parish priests to approach these men.” (Aus. 3.)

“ The war has not improved men. If there was a bad strain in a man, the war brought it out. So it did with a good strain.” (Aus. 4.)

“ I do not think war improves the moral or religious character of men. The surroundings and conditions are always tending to drag down.

Many virtues are increased, such as unselfishness and bravery." (Aus. 5.)

"I believe the war has considerably strengthened and deepened both moral and religious character ; and taught the men a higher valuation of their religion. I do not know how far they talk about their religion, but such discussion as they would hear of their religion from non-Catholics would generally tend to enhance their value of it, seeing that the general expression of their comrades would preponderate in the preference of Catholicism as a war religion over all other forms of denominational religions. Practically all slack Catholic soldiers, if approached and encouraged by a chaplain, in times of war, return to the practice of their religion. I have had very few real recalcitrants—a negligible quantity in fact. I do not think that fear can be called the motive. It may be a part of the occasion. The circumstances of the hardships, dangers, and duties of battle produce an environment of reality which is the occasion of a greater responsiveness to the working of the grace of faith and religion. I have no knowledge of hospitals and base camps. But I have known the same men in the line during the war time and since the armistice. Any falling off in the practice of their religion has been accidental, and due rather to the difficulties of visiting them in peace conditions, than to any other cause." (37.)

Of the general effects of the war, American chaplains write :

"I think the war will have taught many soldiers to set a low value on human life. Many speak of the effect of religion on them when they were in danger. After this is over, there is a certain

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number who become slack, but in the base, aviation, and rest camps, the Sacraments are much frequented." (Fr. M.)

" In general, the war has tended to emphasize the religious character of the men, and to cause reflection and focus their thoughts on a God and a hereafter more than anything before in their lives. In the field they thought of God much more, and practised their religion better than in the training camps, and, I believe, than at home. Moreover, it is certain that at home, in many cases, the parents and other members of the family encouraged the youths in their religious observances, while in the field, despite the absence of any such aids, their general religion was better. The fact that the bulk of the regiment was strongly non-Catholic, even irreligious, did not influence them one way or another." (Fr. M. H.)

APPENDIX

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

BRITISH CHAPLAINS.

1. March 1917 to 15th April 1919. France. Artillery.
2. September 1915 to June 1919. France. Salonika.
(1½ years in camp and trenches; 2 with Base Hospital.)
3. 3½ years. English front line troops (chiefly Middlesex and Lancashire).
4. 1 year. In Line. English troops.
5. June 1915 to July 1919. France. Line.
6. March 1917 to March 1919. France. Line.
7. October 1916 to April 1919. France. Line. Field Artillery.
8. Infantry. Line. C.C.S. Field Ambulance.
9. Soldiers in training. 2 years Infantry in Line.
10. March 1917 to March 1919. France. Germany.
11. March 1917 to March 1919. France. Artillery.
12. From beginning to April 1919. France.
13. Fortnight Base Hospital. 5 months trenches. 1½ years Catholic Club. Arras. 1 year Welsh Guards.
14. 2 years battle front. 2 months C.C.S.
15. 2 years Division in Line; then Corps H.Q.
16. 3½ years. Line. Dressing Stations (advanced and main).
17. September 1914 to March 1919. England. East. France. Line.
18. Base work. Labour. Naval. R.A.F., etc.
19. October 1914 to April 1919. (18 months Officers' Hospital. Line.)
20. 7 months. Station. Hospital. France.

21. September 1914 to April 1919. France.
22. With Division training in England. (3000 Catholics.) Dardanelles. 2 years C.C.S. work and surrounding districts.
23. April 1917 to February 1919. France. 1 year with Field Artillery. 1 year with Infantry Battalion in a Scotch Division. Answers refer to troops in the Line.
24. 4 years. Training Camps. Hospital, home and base. Front.
25. France 8 months. Hospital work, etc.
26. 3 years. Egypt and Palestine ; mostly under active service conditions. Welsh troops.
27. 4 years.
28. 2 years with Division. 8 months C.C.S. ; 2 months Base Hospital. France. 6 months Camps, England.
29. March 1917 to February 1919. France. Line.
30. March 1917 to March 1919. France. Italy.
31. D.A.C. and C.C.S. France.
32. November 1915 to February 1919. Line. C.C.S. and Base Hospital.
33. 3 years. Hospitals in England.
34. 4 years. Hospital and Camps in England.
35. Training in England. Line.
36. 1 year. Training and Line.
37. From end of 1914 till present (July 1919). East. France. Germany. Line.
38. 2 years with fighting Division, largely recruited from England.
39. 4 years. Hospital work in England.
40. 4 years. Mostly in the Line.
41. 3 years. Line (6 months) and Hospitals (France).

CANADIAN CHAPLAINS.

1. 12 months Training Camps. 14 months Line. 9 months Base Depots.
2. Line. C.C.S. Hospital, England.
3. Training in Canada and England and 1 year France. 8 months work in England since April 1917.

4. Exclusively Line work.
5. Line Hospital.
6. Line and immediately behind. Engineers.
7. 3 years. Training Camps. Hospitals, England and France. C.C.S. Troops at rest behind Line.
8. Base Camps. Rest Camps. Hospital work.
9. October 1914 to July 1919. Mostly Line. With a very representative Canadian division.

AUSTRALIAN CHAPLAINS.

1. 3 months France. 10 months Hospitals. 3 months Camps.
2. 2½ years. Training Transport. C.C.S. Artillery.
3. 2 years 8 months. Transport. Hospital. C.C.S. Divisional troops.
4. 2½ years. Transport. Infantry Brigade. C.C.S.
5. 2 years. Transport. Line. Base. (This chaplain's report represents the views of eight other Australian chaplains whom he had consulted.)

NEW ZEALAND CHAPLAINS.

1. 2 years. Hospital Ships and Line.
2. 20 months. Camp. Depot. Hospital.

(Also four American Chaplains.)

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