

**MARTYR PRIEST**

The Life and Death of  
Fr. Willie Doyle S.J  
who died in  
“ THE GREAT WAR ”

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## A Priest's Comment

"I heard her Confession, and brought her Holy Communion next day; (Easter Sunday). As the tears streamed down her old withered face she said, 'Oh, Father, this is the first happy day of my life, for I have never known what happiness is since I was a child. 'I could not help feeling that the opening of Heaven to that poor sinner was a reward more than enough for all the long years of preparation now passed.'" (page 53)

#### THE MESSAGE OF FATIMA

16 August 1917, Fr. Doyle died. On the previous day the children of Fatima were released from prison. On 19 August Our Lady confirmed the promise made on 13 July; that a miracle would be worked on 13 October, 'for all to see and believe.' On 13 July Our Lady showed Hell to the children; Our Lady said, so kindly and so sadly: 'You saw hell, where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them God wants to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart.' Say the Rosary every day, wear the Brown Scapular, say the morning Offering, fulfil the First Saturday devotion (get Confession and Holy Communion; meditate the Rosary for fifteen minutes on five consecutive First Saturdays,) in reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. 'Those who embrace these devotions, will be loved like flowers placed by me to adorn the Throne of my Son.' It has been well said that, the Heart of Mary is the heart of the Fatima Message 'Our Lady told Jacinta, that, more souls go to hell through sins of the flesh than any other sin: Jacinta died crying tears of blood for sinners. Impurity is the weapon most used by the devil to destroy the young: Television to-day is a meditation in impurity and titillation: The forces of evil are taking over the teaching of our children: Are we going to stand 'idly by' and let it happen.

#### MOTHER TERESA R.I.P.

I feel I must say something about this heroic little woman. She gave me courage in my efforts to highlight the rights of the babies in the womb. She said 'abortion is the greatest destroyer of peace.' She has used the same language as our Holy Father the Pope uses- 'they have no defence-they cannot even scream:' So they are more helpless than the poorest of the poor.' Now that Mother Teresa is in the arms of her beloved Jesus, we ask her to intercede for us in this 'valley of tears.'

## INTRODUCTION

"This book is not a mere biography. It is a deliberate attempt to give an exposition of Catholic spirituality particularly from the Jesuit standpoint, by weaving a commentary around a life, which begins with faithful adherence to the commonplace and ends in tragic romance."

The above is the opening statement from Alfred O'Rahilly's book, *Father William Doyle S.J.*; which I have used almost totally. I wish to pay tribute to this man; whom I only met through the pages of this book. I have been told by a friend that Alfred O'Rahilly; who was a widower, became a priest, being adopted by Archbishop McCarthy of Kenya, and eventually became a monsignor. This man received Fr. O'Rahilly's blessing in Dublin in his youth. I dedicate this little book to the memory of Msgr. O'Rahilly; whose soul, I am sure, is enjoying Heaven's bliss in the company of Fr. Doyle.

I quote from Alfred O'Rahilly again: "It has been said that this work may offend Protestant readers. The assumption apparently is that a Catholic Irishman may not write the life of an Irish Catholic priest lest it fall into the hands of an English Protestant. It is a curious fact that Protestants have displayed a more enthusiastic admiration for Fr. Doyle than even his fellow Catholics. A Protestant preacher in November 1922 says, "It is necessary to get into a sympathetic atmosphere in order to appreciate the life of the great Roman Catholic Saint, Fr. William Doyle. Many are apt to regard the Roman Catholic Religion as a mass of cobwebs. But will such a great saint live in a house of webs? In looking at his photograph I see a man with a broad high forehead, the sweetest, kindest smile, a face without guile, the soul of sincerity and kindness. He was born to puzzle the world, and we must place him in a niche among great men.

"Even in his early boyhood there were signs of sainthood. He was a happy healthy boy, but even then disciplining himself to be a saint. All men, at some time in their lives, have a call to aspire to higher things. Many let the call go by, but to the true saint the call is ever being repeated.

"The chief point that the life of Fr. Doyle brings before us is that saints still live in the twentieth century. He was a true man of God, yet he was always jolly. He played cricket and rugby as other men do,



yet he has a place among the saints of God. On one occasion he had been to a retreat, nourishing his soul by quiet communication with God, when on his way back he saw a bed of nettles. At once his face lit up, and undressing he rolled in the nettles until his body seemed on fire. Then he went home. The doctor was called. He said it was an accident. The next morning, though still very ill, he went to Mass, and on receiving the body and blood of Christ the fever left him. On another occasion, he stood up to his neck in a dirty pond praying for sinners. All through his life, he was constantly chastising this body of his for the love of Jesus. On looking at his photograph we can hardly realise that such a fine intellectual man did such things. But then one realises that all the spiritual heroes of old did such things, their souls so full of longing to reach their goal.

“He then became a Jesuit. His first desire was to be a missionary, but he had learnt to obey, so he put his desire aside, and became a chaplain at the Front during the War. Here he proved absolutely fearless, and lived entirely for the Irishmen who were in his charge. He did not go through a course of training as others did. It was not necessary, for all his life he had been training. Small wonder that when such a man was in the trenches he was able to bear all hardships and never grew weary.

“How can we best fit him into our lives? By letting the spirit triumph over the flesh, instead of helping the flesh to trample on the spirit, by entering into the spirit of his life. And thus he will help us better to understand Roman Catholicism.”

Because of the limited space at my disposal, I will have to omit much of the details of the spirituality of Fr. Doyle. Yet I hope to renew an outline of his life, in the memory of those who had heard of him in folklore. I also hope that young people will read it and learn something about the need for a clean young life, which is sneered at so much today.

“Martyr Priest”

Chapter I

### **Childhood and Youth.**

William Joseph Gabriel Doyle was born at Melrose, Dalkey, Co. Dublin, on 3 March 1873. His father was Mr. Hugh Doyle, an official of the High Court of Justice in Ireland, who died on 28 March 1924, in his ninety-second year. His mother was Christina Mary Doyle, nee Byrne, who died 19 March 1915, at the age of 83. Willie was the youngest of seven children, four boys and three girls; the oldest and the youngest of the girls married; the second became a sister of Mercy. The oldest of the boys died ten days before he was due to be ordained in Rome, in 1887 in his twenty-eight year, for the Dublin diocese. The second son entered the legal profession and became recorder of Galway. Willie's third brother Charlie, a few years older than himself and the inseparable companion of his boyhood, became a Jesuit.

Willie was a frail and delicate child, though, like most highly strung children, he had great reserves of energy. All through life, indeed, ill health was one of his great trials, and for some years before his death, he suffered acutely from an internal complaint, but, curiously enough, his nearest approach to death was due, not to sickness, but to an accident. When he was quite a little fellow, his nurse one night placed a lighted candle on his little cot, probably to enable herself to read or sew. The nurse fell asleep, and the candle overturned and set the bed clothes on fire. Fortunately his father, who was sleeping in the next room, was awakened by the smoke and rushed into the nursery. He found the cot on fire, and little Willie fast asleep with his legs curled up, as though he felt the fire creeping towards him. In an instant the child was lifted out of bed, and the mattress and bed clothes thrown out through the window. As a military chaplain Fr. Willie once laughingly alluded to this escape as his first experience under fire.

For all his future holiness, Willie was by no means a stilted or unnatural child. He played games and he played pranks, and though he cannot be said to have been naughty, he was far from being irritatingly pious. It is consoling to find that like most of us he played at being

a soldier. Long before he read of Ignatius as a saint, he knew about him as a soldier. It was not always a mimic battle; even at this early age he started real warfare, he began a lifelong struggle against himself. At the beginning of Lent, when he was quite a little boy, an old aunt, chancing to go into his mother's bedroom, found him talking in front of the mirror. "You villain, you wretch," he kept saying to his reflection, "I'll starve you, I'll murder you, not a sweet will you get, not a bit of cake will you get."

This is one of the few glimpses we obtain of Willie's interior life during his boyhood. Even of his maturer soul-struggles we should know little or nothing were it not for his chance preservation of his notes and diaries. All through his life he sought to deny and mortify himself, but this never affected his good humour and kindness, no one would suspect his slow struggle for self-mastery and perfection. To others he was always thoughtful and kind and charitable.

For the poor people on Dalkey Hill, Willie constituted himself into a conference of the St. Vincent de Paul. He raised funds for the poor, and visited them to keep them company. He tidied up for old people who could not do it for themselves. While helping his poor friends in their temporal needs, he did not forget their souls. He skilfully reminded them of their prayers and the sacraments. He also strongly advocated temperance. There was an old man on the Hill whom Willie had often unsuccessfully tried to reform. After years of hard drinking he lay dying and could not be induced to see the priest. For eight hours Willie prayed by the bedside of the half-conscious dying sinner. Shortly before the end he came to himself, asked for the priest and made his peace with God. Only when he had breathed his last, did Willie return home. His first missionary victory.

Between Willie and his brother, Charlie, there was a close bond of attachment from childhood. As they were only a few years apart in age, they were naturally more closely united with one another than with their older brothers and sisters. Together they learned their first letters. Together they fished and bathed, and built themselves a wonderful house in the branches of a mighty elm. Together they knelt and prayed. Their prayers and catechism and all things religious were lovingly superintended by the future nun of the family, whom her young brothers, with quick instinct for hitting off a character with a name, dubbed "the missionary," thereby also recording a tribute to their sister's

religious influence. Willie's devotion to his older brother was remarkable even in a household where all the members of the family were so united and affectionate. Nothing was too good for Charlie. Everything was shared with him, sweets, secrets, sorrows. Wherever he went Willie followed. He was always ready to run, to fetch and carry at a word from his brother. When bedtime came, his last good night was always reserved for Charlie. And these two, who as boys, played and studied together, fought their mimic battles together, and shared their little joys and sorrows, were destined not to be divided in life. For in ways mysterious they both joined the Society of Jesus.

At the age of eleven Willie went to Ratcliffe College, Leicestershire, conducted by the Fathers of the Institute of Charity. In school he was a good student, good at games, and was a favourite among his fellow students. His brother-in-law, at whose house in Sheffield he usually spent the Christmas vacation, said he was the nicest schoolboy he ever met. He was fond of gardening, and this interest was developed at Ratcliffe College. On summer holidays he maintained contact with the poor people of Dalkey Hill, an aspect of his life which developed as he grew older.

On 31 March 1891, Willie entered the Jesuit novitiate of Tullabeg, near Tullamore, where his brother Charlie was already studying. In a letter to his mother he says, "I must thank everybody through you, for the dear letters and good wishes for my birthday, more especially am I grateful for the big box of sweets from your own loved self. That same box of sweets, I am sorry to say, has met with an untimely end. It is a sad tale, the telling of which makes one's mouth, I mean eyes, water. The box was left in the recreation room for inspection, but when I returned it was gone. The only answer to my anxious inquiries came from a solemn voice in the corner of the room: It has been carried off by the influenza! I suppose you must be thinking that I have met a like end, seeing it is so long since you heard from me."

This frolicsome gaiety was a feature of Willie Doyle's life, but behind it was a hidden life of interior earnestness and devotion. But only a few stray sheets survive to give us all too meagre information concerning the inner life of the novice. Fortunately one precious little document remains to attest his astonishing fervour.

**A.M.D.G. ac B.V.M.**  
**My Martyrdom for Mary's Sake.**

"Darling Mother Mary, in preparation for the glorious martyrdom which I feel assured thou art going to obtain for me, I, thy most unworthy child, on this the first day of thy month, solemnly commence my life of slow martyrdom by earnest hard work and constant self denial. (With my blood I promise thee to keep this resolution, do thou, sweet mother, assist me and obtain for me the one favour I wish and long for. To die a Jesuit Martyr. May God's will, not mine, be done, Amen)." 1 May 1893.

The words in brackets were written in his own blood as ink, and each side of the word "Martyr" is a smudge of blood, as if thus to seal his compact with Our Lady. Think of the twenty four years of life which remained to the novice! Right well did he keep his compact. His was a "life of slow Martyrdom by earnest hard work and constant self-denial." And the compact was kept in Heaven also. As on earth of old, "Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart." Our Lady obtained for him the one favour he wished and longed for. William Doyle died a Jesuit Martyr.

Some of the reflections and resolutions which he recorded during the triduum of preparation for his vows, have also happily survived and are here set down. "It depends entirely on myself whether I become a saint or not. If I wish and will to be one, half the battle is over. Certainly Gods help is secured. Every fresh effort to become holy gets fresh grace, and grace is what makes the soul holy and pleasing to God."

"God has a work for each one to do; the devil also. For each one can be an influence for good or evil to those around. No one goes to heaven or hell alone. Unless I am holy, I may do the devils work. The closer I try to imitate the Sacred Heart, the holier shall I become. How can I get nearer that Divine Heart than by receiving Holy Communion often and, fervently? The Sacred Heart will then be next to my own and teach me quickest and best how to be a saint."

"Can I refuse to be holy when God Himself entreats me to be holy? 'Walk before me and be perfect.' 'Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.' Another great motive for becoming a saint, the wish, the command of God! I have been called by God to be a member of

the Society of His Son. To be a true Jesuit I must be a close imitator of Jesus Christ, an 'alter Christus.' The Society was instituted to glorify the Name of Jesus by its learning, by its zeal, but above all by its holiness. I must therefore, strive for three things. To become learned, an authority on all subjects, not for self or glory of self, but for God and the glory of God. To become a lover of souls and to become holy. This, because the Jesuit without sanctity is no true son of Ignatius.

"O loving Saviour, forgive me the past, accept me repentant, help me, for I am going to become with thy assistance, A Thorough Jesuit and a great saint."

When Willie was sent to do Philosophy in Belgium, he had already spent four years in Clongowes as a teacher and prefect. This had been caused by interruptions in his studies because of health problems. He had been allowed to go back home to allow his health to improve. At one stage it was feared that he might have to abandon his wish to be a Jesuit. After a period at home, he was sent to Clongowes where his health improved. In 1898 he started philosophy. He joined the exiled French Jesuits at Enghien, near Brussels. His health disimproved in Belgium, so he was sent to St. Mary's Hall, Stoneyhurst, for a further two years. Though suffering very much from digestive trouble, he never complained and was always bright and cheerful. During that period the Boer war was in progress, and feelings were a bit high because of different nationalities which formed the community. His humour helped very much to keep the respect of all.

Willie returned to Clongowes in 1901, and after two years he went to Belvedere. In 1904 he was sent to Milltown Park, for theology. In a note 25 Nov. 1906 bearing the title "The practice of Humility" "I will strive to get a great contempt for myself, to think little of and despise myself, and to pray and desire that others may do the same. I have nothing that God has not given me. I can do nothing without God's grace and help. In a few, very few, years my name will be forgotten. What would people think of me if they knew me as I know myself? My pride and desire for praise, my mean uncharitable thoughts about others; my fear of humiliation, the imperfect way I have lived in the Society, the sins I have committed, the scandal given, the terrible harm done to others by making them tepid, breaking rules etc., my resolutions broken in an hour. In spite of all this I deceive myself that I am pleasing God. . . ."



Another undated sheet is headed; "What must I do to become a saint.

(1) Excite in myself an ardent desire and determination to become one; cost what it may.

(2) Beg and pray without ceasing for this grace and the desire of holiness.

(3) Take each action and duty as if it were the last and only one of my life, and perform it with extraordinary fervour.

(4) Have a fixed duty for every moment and not depart from it, never waste a moment.

(5) The spirit of constant prayer.

(6) Relentless war against my will and inclinations, (agere contra) at every moment, in all things.

(7) The faithful practice of little mortifications."

On 7 June 1907 he noted down the following resolutions:

"While making the holy hour to-day, the feast of the Sacred Heart, I felt inspired to make this resolution: Sweet Jesus as a first step towards my becoming a saint, which You desire so much, I will try to do each duty, each little action, as perfectly and fervently as I possibly can. St. John Berchmans, help me."

He constantly asked his "missionary" sister for her prayers. This is how he humorously puts the request in a letter written at Easter, 1905: "You will rejoice to hear I am starting a new devotion called 'the fifty two Saturdays.' Its conditions are very simple. You get as many good souls as possible to join you. Next a deserving object of charity is chosen. The founder of this devotion modestly suggests himself. Then tuck up your habit, that it may not get worn out, and on your knees pray as hard as you can and as long as you can for the spiritual improvement or happy death of the said individual. If this is kept up for fifty years there is certain hope of better things."

In a letter written to her a month before his ordination he tells her how eagerly yet tremulously he is looking forward to the great consummation: "As you may imagine, all my thoughts at present are centred on the Great Day, 28 July. The various events of the year have helped to keep it before my mind, learning to say Mass, the Divine Office etc., but now that such a short time remains, I find it hard to realise that I shall be a priest so very soon. Were it not for all the good prayers especially yours, sister of mine, which are being offered up daily

for me, I should almost feel in despair, because these long years of waiting (nearly seventeen now) have only brought home to me how unworthy I am of such an honour and such dignity."

Willie Doyle was ordained priest on 28 July 1907. Shortly after the ceremony he wrote to the sister to whom he owed so much.

"I know that you will be glad to receive a few lines from the hands which a few hours ago have been consecrated with the holy oil. Thank God a thousand, thousand times, I can say at long last I am a priest, even though I be so unworthy of what that holy name implies. How can I tell you all that my heart feels at this moment? It is full to overflowing with joy and peace and gratitude to the good God for all that he has done for me, and with heartfelt thankfulness to the dear old missionary for all her prayers.

I say my first Mass to-morrow at nine at Hampton, (Carmelite Convent in Drumcondra) for the dear parents. The second also at nine at Terenure will be for you. Thank you for all you have done for me; but above all thank the Sacred Heart for this crowning grace imparted to your little brother who loves you so dearly."

Of his inner feelings we have just one little private record:

"My loving Jesus, on this the morning of my Ordination to the Priesthood, I wish to place in Your Sacred Heart, in gratitude for all You have done for me, the resolution from this day forward to go straight for Holiness. My earnest wish and firm resolve is to strive with might and main to become a Saint."

**PEACE AND WAR.**

Among the notes which Fr. Doyle recorded during his theology, there are many which have a personal touch and embody his own ideals and aspirations. Some of them are quoted to help us to understand his ideas of holiness.

He who was soon to be perhaps imprudent himself, at least made no mistake as to what constituted true sanctity. "How many deceive themselves " he wrote " in thinking that sanctity consists in the 'holy follies' of the saints. How many look on holiness as something beyond their reach or capability, and think that it is to be found only in the performance of extraordinary actions. Satisfied that they have not the strength for great austerities, the time for much prayer, or the courage for painful humiliations, they silence their conscience with the thought that great sanctity is not for them, that they have not been called to be saints. With their eyes fixed on the heroic deeds of the few, they miss the daily little sacrifices God asks them to make; and while waiting for something great to prove their love, they lose the countless little opportunities of sanctification each day bears within its bosom." Sept. 1905.

In the lives of canonised saints, and of him whose life we are recording, there are doubtless 'holy follies' and grace inspired imprudences. But these are not the essence of sanctity, they are its bloom, whereas its stem is self-conquest. Without these there can be no great holiness. No terrifying penances marked the life of St. John Berchmans or of that winsome fragile nun who is known as the Little Flower. But without the slow secret mortification of doing ordinary and mostly trivial duties well, there can be no spiritual advance. Heroism is not a sudden romantic achievement; it is the fruit of years of humdrum faithfulness. This is not only the lesson of Fr. Doyle's heroic life and death, it is the idea which here at the outset of his apostolic career he clearly fixed for himself. His favourite motto was St. Ignatius's phrase, *Agere contra* : Act against yourself. Into these two words there is condensed the essence of practical and delusion-proof holiness. Act, not merely think or feel, not against outer or imaginary enemies but against our lower selves. "How much is comprised in the little words *agere*

*contra*! Therein is the real secret of sanctity, the hidden source from which the saints have drunk deep of the love of God and reached that height of glory they now enjoy." Oct. 1905.

Again he records his view of heroism, which always had an attraction for his chivalrous, impulsive, generous nature.

"Heroism," he says, "is a virtue which has an attraction for every heart. It seems to lift us out of our petty selves and make us for a moment forget our selfish interests. Thus it is that in all times the saints have ever had such an attraction for men, they are heroes! In their secret, hidden lives of prayer and penance men saw a heroism which was not one sharp pang of a fearless deed, leaving their names to history as a nation's pride, but a nobler heroism of a life of countless noble deeds unknown perhaps to man; by God alone were their secret victories seen". Nov. 1905.

Some time later he wrote out a short sermon on Heroism taking as his text St. John 10:11 "The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep." "And you" he cries "wives and bread winners, have you no task within the fold, no little flock to tend and guard? Has not God committed to your care the innocent lambs, the little ones of your household? Within the pasture of your own family are you the good shepherd, or the thief and the hireling? Jesus does not ask of the shepherds now the shedding of their blood. But he does ask of them a death more hard, more lingering, a life long death of sacrifice for his flock, the daily crucifying of every evil passion, the stamping out of sloth, of anger, of drunkenness, the constant striving after the holiness of your state of life. Look upon the great Christ, the Good Shepherd hanging on the Cross. He is our model, our hero. Gaze well upon his bleeding wounds, His mangled limbs, that sad agony-stricken face. Look well and pray with generous heart that he may make you heroes in His service." April 1906.

The final phase of Fr. Doyle's life has been so often described as heroic service in a human cause, that these few thoughts on heroism written many years before, must have for us not only a biographical interest, but an earnest impressiveness. They were not only written they were lived.

"My belief in the Mass as an easy way of sanctification," wrote Fr. Doyle in a letter in 1914, "is growing ever stronger, I realise more and more that for religious especially and for a priest naturally, the Mass is the key of the inner sanctuary of God's love. The Holy Sacrifice was very much in my mind during the retreat. One thought especially

occurred again and again, namely, what an inexhaustible reservoir of grace and endless sanctity is contained in the worthy celebration of, or assistance at, Mass. It seemed as if I were getting only drops instead of torrents of grace and love which every Mass could bring to the soul."

This fervour at Mass was but one expression of his love for the Blessed Sacrament. He became a Knight of the Blessed Sacrament on 1 Jan. 1917 at Locre in Belgium, where he was military chaplain.

"I have often wondered if it is imagination," he writes in a letter July 12, 1913 "but it seems to me that when giving Holy Communion to children, especially to the very little ones, our Lord seems to leave my hand with a joy which I can feel. It would be hard to describe how He chains me to Him, the magnetic attraction, the more than physical force that drags me to the Tabernacle, and then the pain with which I realise at His feet how small and feeble the human heart is to give Him a love worthy of His." He spent every spare moment in church or chapel, and since spare moments grew scarcer as the years went on, his hours of sleep suffered. On some feast days, such as Corpus Christi, he spent up to seven hours before the Blessed Sacrament. Prayer was easier in the quiet of the night, once one got over the effort of leaving the warm bed. In his retreat of Sept. 1915 he records: "A greater urging to spend every available moment with Him and to try nocturnal adoration oftener;" (there is a note by St. Francis de Sales warning against too much loss of sleep). Fr. Doyle expressed his attraction for such prayer in a letter written at Tullow on 12 May 1913.

"I find the temptation growing stronger every day to leave aside all work that is not absolutely necessary and to spend the time with Jesus. Why does He make me realise so much His loneliness in the Tabernacle and His longing for 'one to console Him,' and at the same time fill my hands with so many things to do? My room here is opposite the little oratory, only a thin partition separates the two rooms; and it is hard to sleep when in fancy I can almost hear the beating of His heart of love. He is always 'calling' and He seems happy and consoled when I steal into Him when everyone else is asleep and He is left alone. I long to open wide my heart and let Him hide Himself there, to have Him transform me into Himself, so that I can exclaim, 'I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me!' Gal.2:20.

It was on the mission that he most keenly felt his inability to visit our Lord at night, it was then he realised how much a domestic chapel means.

"I never knew," runs a letter of his, "how much Jesus in the Tabernacle enters our lives as religious, until I had to live for weeks in houses where he was absent. I manage to make the Holy Hour each week, though I have to wait until all are asleep before I can steal out to the chapel, sometimes a couple of miles away."

Later on, when stationed in England as military chaplain, he wrote. "It is bitterly hard to have to live day after day without His presence except for a few moments each morning during Mass, which only makes things harder still, for I am left hungering for Him for twenty four hours. I have found a tiny chapel some miles from here, but I can seldom get there. The thought of Jesus in that lonely Tabernacle haunts me always, and at night I seem to hear Him calling gently and sadly. Oh, I wish I could go to Him through the mud and rain." A month later Jan. 1916 he writes. "We came here (Bordon Camp) in awful rain and wind, but on reaching the barracks, the first thing I saw were the words 'R.C.Hut.' Thinking it was just the empty hut for Sunday Mass, and yet half hoping, I opened the door to find a beautifully furnished little chapel with the red lamp that told me all. I think I now know what Mary felt when she found her Son in the temple. How I thanked Him for this gift, for His goodness in sending my regiment to camp about His dwelling! His goodness did not stop there, for without asking him, the priest in charge gave me the key, so that I can come to Jesus at any time. I am very happy now, for I have Him 'My God and All'. All else cannot supply His place and life seems quite changed."

Even when serving at the Front, his thoughts turned to night time prayer and adoration. Here is an entry dated 25 Oct 1916 "Jesus has long urged me to give Him a whole night of prayer and reparation. Last night I prayed in my dug-out at Kemmel from 9 until 5 (eight hours), most of the time on my knees. I bound myself beforehand to do so by vow in order not to let myself off. Though I had only two hours sleep, I am not very tired or weary to-day. Jesus wants more of these nights of prayer, adoration and atonement."

This true follower of the Prince of Peace pursued his calm inner life amid the scenes and sounds of human strife, kneeling in his dug-out and adoring his Eucharistic Lord in the pyx as quietly and devotedly as if he



were in a chapel. Two months before his death, he notes 21 June 1917 "Jesus told me to-day that the work of regeneration and sanctification is to be done by leading souls to him in the Blessed Sacrament." It is precisely this intense personal attachment to Jesus that is the key to the life of a man like Fr. Doyle. It was the driving force of that chivalrous Spanish hidalgo who, after winning earthly glory at the siege of Pamplona, hung up his sword at the shrine of our Lady of Montserrat and enlisted in the service of the king whose proclamation rang in his ears. "My will is to conquer the whole world and all enemies and thus to enter into My Fathers glory. Therefore whoever desires to come with Me must labour with Me, in order that following me in pain, he may likewise follow Me in glory." Mecum (with me) does not this little word carry in it the heart of Christianity? The sacrifices of religious life are possible because it is life with Christ. The heroism of Christian charity lives on because it is done for Christ, with Christ, to Christ. What a measureless volume of human service has been created by the ideal of Christ! What a burden of human suffering has been borne with Christ, laid beside the Passion of the Son of Man, even since the days when Peter and the apostles went "rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (Acts 5:41) To-day after twenty centuries, the name of Jesus is still as potent, and the friendship of Christ is alone able to inspire what is most sublime and heroic in humanity. Msgr. Benson wrote, "no man can advance three paces on the road of perfection unless Jesus Christ walks beside him." Early Nov. 1914 Fr. Doyle offered himself to his provincial as a war chaplain. In a letter dated 10 Nov. 1914 "my offering myself as a war chaplain has had a wonderful effect on me. I long to give my blood for Jesus and, if it is His will, to die a martyr of charity. The thought that at any moment I may be called to the Front, perhaps to die, has roused a great desire to do all I can while I have life. I feel great strength to make any sacrifice and little difficulty in doing so. I may not have long now to prove my love for Jesus."

It was a year later 15 Nov. 1915 before he received his appointment from the War Office as chaplain to the 16th Division. A few letters survive to tell us his impressions of camp life. "I cannot say I am quite in love with camp life, which in many respects is very repellent. But even in these disagreeable things there is a joy and a secret pleasure, since it means all the more merit and, let us hope, a richer harvest of souls. My

eyes have been opened still more to the awful godlessness of the world and the need, the immense need, there is for us who owe so much to our Blessed Lord to try and make up to Him for all this by greater love and generosity. It will never equal, I fear, the worldly generosity of these men. For example, this morning, a regiment marched out of camp at 5am, in torrents of rain, merely for exercise. When they return to-night, they will dry their wet underclothing by sleeping in them!"

On New Years Day 1916 Fr. Doyle with his regiment (8th Royal Irish Fusiliers) moved from Whitley Camp to Bordon Camp, Hants, as described earlier, and his joy at having a little hut with a Tabernacle. "I am writing this, sitting on a piece of wood, there are no chairs in our quarters. There are about 1,200 Catholics in our brigade now. I get a few 'big fish' each evening."

The reference to soul fishing will remind us that his life was by no means contemplative at this time, except in so far as he was able to be Martha by day and Mary by night. His work was very arduous and grew more so as the day of departure grew near. "Many an old rooster whom no mission ever moved has been blown out of his nest by the news of our departure. I have got to love my brave lads almost like my own brothers and sisters. They are wild and reckless, and at the same time so full of faith and love of God and His Blessed Mother. Our Brigade is leaving tomorrow for France. I am waiting until Friday night, so as to get in all the confessions I can." He received unexpected orders from the General to proceed overseas on Thursday Feb. 17, 1916. Half an hour before starting he wrote to his father. "Strange to say, I have not the smallest anxiety about the possible dangers of warfare, not so great for me as for others, but I do dread the horrors of the battlefield which all say no words can picture. Still it is a consolation to know what a comfort the mere presence of a priest is to both officers and men alike."

After a wet day at Le Havre, and twenty one and a half hours in the train, there was a march of twelve miles. On Sunday 5 March he said Mass for the 8th Fusiliers who were stationed at Noeux-les-Mines. After he had finished at about 9 o'clock he mounted his bicycle in order to go to the 8th Inniskellings, of whom he also had charge, and say Mass at eleven for them. They were stationed about four miles away near the ruined village of Mazingarbe. Fr. Doyle may be left to describe his adventure in his own words. "On the way I noticed that heavy firing was going on ahead, but it was only when I reached a bend in the road that I

realised the enemy were actually shelling the very spot I had to pass. Some soldiers stopped me, saying it was dangerous to go on. At that moment I was wondering what had become of the side of a vacant house which had suddenly vanished in a cloud of smoke, and I was painfully aware of the proximity of high explosive shells. Here was a fix, I knew my regiment was waiting in the village for Mass, and also that half of them were going to the trenches that afternoon for the first time. If I did not turn up they would lose Confession and Holy Communion. But the only way to reach them was by the shell swept road. What really decided me was the thought that I was carrying the Blessed Sacrament, and I felt that, having Our Lord himself with me, no harm could possibly come to me. I mounted the bicycle and faced the music. I don't want you to think me very brave and courageous for I confess I felt horribly afraid. It was my baptism of fire, and one needs to grow accustomed to the sound of bursting shells. Just then I was wishing my regiment in Jericho and every German gun at the bottom of the Red Sea or any other hot place. " Call it a miracle if you will, but at the moment I turned the corner the guns ceased firing, and not a shell fell until I was in the village Church. Naturally I did not know this was going to happen, and it was anything but pleasant riding down the last stretch of road listening for the screams of the coming shell. Have you ever had a nightmare in which you were pursued by ten mad bulls, while the faster you tried to run, the more your feet stuck in the mud? These were my feelings as I pedalled down that blessed road that seemed to grow longer and longer the further I went."

The Cure being away at the war, Fr. Doyle acted as priest of the parish. He heard by chance of an old woman being very ill. He gave her the last sacraments and she died almost before he got home.

"My life has many consolations," he says, "and it is just as well, for this is a sad, sad war of which you at home have but the faintest idea. May the good God end it soon."

Sunday 19 March 1916. "We had Mass in the open; as the church would not hold the local people and the soldiers. I started at seven in the morning by giving Holy Communion to the men whose confessions I had heard the previous evening. This was followed by a number of confessions in French for the townspeople and some French soldiers. "I had arranged for Mass in the open. I selected a spot in the school yard. Armed with the Mayor's permission I approached the schoolmaster

for his sanction, and found him most obliging and gracious, I found out afterwards that this man was very black against religion, but he must have been surprised by my innocent request.

"I had never celebrated Mass in the open before, and I think the men were as impressed as I was. When I finished breakfast I found a number of men waiting for confession. I gave them Communion as well, though they were not fasting, as they were going to the trenches that evening and, being in danger of death, could receive the Blessed Sacrament as Viaticum. It was the last Communion for many poor fellows who, I trust, are praying for me in heaven now.

"Having polished off all who came to the church, I made a raid on the men's billets, and spent a few hours in stables and barns, in fact anywhere, shriving the remainder who gladly availed themselves of the chance of settling up accounts before they started for the front. The harvest was good and consoling. Just before they marched at six in the evening, I gave the whole regiment, the Catholics at least, a General Absolution. So the men went off in the best of spirits, light of heart with the joy of a good conscience. I dined with two transport officers who bring up the rations and ammunition to the soldiers, and then mounted my horse and rode up to Headquarters at communication trenches.

"I had a good old beast of a horse, quiet but with plenty of pace, who simply turns up her nose at a bursting shell with supreme contempt. All went well until suddenly six of our guns, hidden by the roadside, went off with a bang. This was not playing the game, and Flunkibrandos (the horse's name) stopped dead, or rather reversed engines and began to go astern. I tried to think of all the manoeuvres, and was devoutly wishing I had a bridle tied to her tail, for Flunki backed and backed until she pulled with a bump against a brick wall which the Germans had kindly spared, one of the few, it must be confessed, left in that town, when she sailed ahead again as if nothing had happened. I am bringing home a brick of that wall, for if it had not been there, I would have been half way across Germany by now.

"My work done, I mounted again and made for home. It was rather weird riding past the shattered houses in the dark, with the ping of a stray bullet to make you uncomfortable, while every few minutes a brilliant star-shell would burst overhead and the guns spat viciously at each other. An officer told me that, in the early days of the war our star-shells were a miserable failure, and when at last we got the thing right, the Germans



greeted their first appearance with a great cheer. The war has its humorous as well as its tragic side. I reached my billet and tumbled in just as the clock struck midnight."

This of course is the record of a specially strenuous day. But it gives a good idea of the chaplain's wonderful energy and devotedness. He was proud of the men for whom he worked. "They are a fine lot of fellows" he wrote "and make a good impression on the people wherever they go, more especially here in the North of France, (the mining district), where most of the men are too busy washing the dust out of themselves on Sunday to bother about much else. Hence it is an object lesson to the French to see the crowds who come to Mass and Communion daily and Benediction in the evening."

"I had an amusing experience the first night I spent in the trenches," he writes. On arriving here I found two officers in the dug-out which was intended for me; but as they were leaving next day I did not care to evict them. After some search I came across an unoccupied glorified rabbit-hole. Any port in a storm. It was not too inviting, looking rather damp; but I got a trench board which made a capital foundation for a bed, and spread my sleeping bag over it. In spite of the discomfort I slept soundly until I was awakened by feeling a huge rat sitting on my chest. The rats around here beat anything I have ever seen. If I told you they were as big as a sheep you would scarcely believe me, so let me say a lamb. In any case this fellow was a whopper, weighing fully seven pounds as I proved afterwards. I thought first of all 'I had them again'; but as I gradually awoke more fully I felt his weight and could dimly see the black outline. Before I quite realised what was happening a warm soft tongue began to lick my face, and I recognised my old friend the dog.

"When introducing you to my friends the rats," he writes, "I made a serious omission in forgetting another class of most attentive friends, smaller in size but much more active in a close personal way; they are not called teas, but something very like that. You must remember that the unwashed German lived in our cellar for months, and, departing, left behind him a large number of small fierce warriors from across the Rhine. Next came the French. There is not much picking on a Frenchman; so it is small wonder that when they, in turn, departed, their small companions remained in the hope of better things to come. Tommy Atkins then appeared and, not to be outdone, left a legacy also.

Fortunately these visitors were natives of different countries, speaking different tongues; otherwise had they been friends and united in policy, we would have been literally pulled out of bed. One end of another dug-out, in one of the trenches at Loos, had been blown in by a big shell burying two men whom it was impossible to get out. We lived at the other end. The poor chaps were covered with clay, but not deep enough to keep out the smell of decaying bodies, which did not help one's appetite at meal time. Then, when your nerves were more jumpy than usual, you could swear you saw the dead man's boot moving as if it were alive."

Next morning, which he notes as the twenty fifth anniversary of his entrance into the Society, he emerged to view the havoc and ruin of what was once a town. He discovered a tiny wayside chapel of our Lady of Consolation with the altar still standing; and here amid the inferno of shot and shell he celebrated Mass.

"I had an opportunity, thanks to the fog, of examining closely in daylight one of the wonders of the war, the famous Crucifix or calvary of Loos. This is a very large cross standing on a mound, in a most exposed position, the centre of fierce fighting. One of the four trees standing by it has been torn up by a shell, the branches of the others smashed to bits, a tombstone at its feet lies broken in half and the houses on either side are a heap of ruins. But neither cross nor figure has been touched. I looked closely and could not see a bullet hole. Surely if the Almighty can protect the image of His Son, it will be no great difficulty to guard His priest also, as indeed He has done in a wonderful way." Fr. Doyle was cure of this parish of trenches, his church being his dug-out situated in the support trench near the doctor's dressing station. He also humorously included innumerable rats, insects and vermin among his parishioners! Of his men he was really proud. "Our poor lads are just grand," he says, "they curse like troopers all the day, they give the Germans hell, purgatory and heaven all combined at night, and next morning come kneeling in the mud for Mass and Holy Communion when they get a chance. They beam all over with genuine pleasure when their Padre comes past their dug-out or meets them in the trench." It may be added that he was often in the front trench to bless the rain sodden, mudstained, weary watchers. On Easter Sunday 23 April, he celebrated his first Mass in the trenches. He had quite a congregation, chiefly of officers, as the men were unable to leave their posts. "My church was a bit of a trench,"

he writes, "the altar a pile of sandbags. Though we had to stand deep in mud, not knowing the moment a call to arms would come, many a fervent prayer went up to heaven that morning."

On the evening of Wed. 26 April, the Germans began a slight bombardment which was the prelude to a formidable attack. It was Fr. Doyle's first experience of a battle and proved near being his last. Having met an officer who, though only slightly scratched, was badly shaken by an exploding shell, he brought him to his dug-out, tended him and made him sleep in his own bunk. Later on when he himself tried to sleep, he found he could not do so as the night was cold and he had given up his own blanket. His subsequent adventures may be best given in the words of his own narrative.

"About four in the morning the thought struck me that it would be a good thing to walk back to the village to warm myself and say an early Mass for the nuns, who usually have to wait hours for some chaplain to turn up. They have been very kind to me, and I was glad of this chance of doing this little service for them. The village is about two miles behind our trench, in such a position that one can leave cover with perfect safety and walk there across the fields. As I left the trench at 4.45am. the sun was just rising. It was a perfect morning with a gentle breeze blowing. Now and again came the crack of a rifle, but all was unusually calm and still. Little did I think about the deadly storm about to burst and hurry so many brave men into eternity. I had just reached a point half way between our trenches and the village when I heard behind me the deep boom of a German gun quickly followed by a dozen others. In a moment our gunners replied and before I could well realise what was taking place, the air was alive with shells. At first I thought it was just a bit of the usual 'good morning greeting' and that after ten minutes artillery 'strafe' all would be quiet once more. But I soon saw this was a serious business, for gun after gun, and battery after battery, was rapidly coming into action, until at the lowest number 500 guns were roaring all around me. It was a magnificent if terrifying sight. The ground fairly shook with the roar of the guns, for the 'heavies' now had taken up the challenge, and all around the horizon I could see the clouds of smoke and dust from the bursting shells as both sides kept searching for their opponents' hidden cannon.

"There I stood in the very centre of the battle, the one man of all the thousands engaged who was absolutely safe, for I was away from the

trenches, there were no guns or troops near me to draw fire, and though tens of thousands of shells went over my head, not even a splinter fell near me. I felt that the Good God had quietly dumped me there until all the danger had passed. After a while, seeing that this heavy shelling meant an attack of some kind, and that soon many a dying man would need my help, I turned round and made my way towards the ambulance station. As I approached the trenches I noticed the smoke from the bursting shells, which was hanging thickly over them and was being driven towards me across the fields. For once I said to myself I am going to smell the smoke of a real battle, and I stepped out quite gaily. The next moment I had turned and was running back for my life. The Germans had started a poison gas attack which I had mistaken for shell smoke and I had walked straight into it.

"After about 20 yards I stopped to see what was to be done, for I knew it was useless to try and escape by running. I saw (assuredly again providentially) that I had struck the extreme edge of the gas and also that the wind was blowing it away to my left. A hundred yards in the opposite direction and I was safe. I must confess for a moment I got a shock, as a gas attack was the very last thing I was thinking about. In fact we thought the Germans had given it up. Fortunately too I had not forgotten the old days of the chemistry room at Ratcliffe College nor Brother Thompson and his 'stink bottles,' so I knew at the first whiff it was chlorine gas and time for this child to make tracks.

"But I was not yet out of the woods. Even as I was congratulating myself on my good fortune, I saw both right and left of where I stood the green wave of a second gas attack rolling towards me like some huge spectre stretching out its ghostly arms. As I saw it coming, my heart went out to God in a fervent act of gratitude for his goodness to me. As probably you know we all carry 'smoke helmets' slung over our shoulders in a case, to be used against a gas attack. That morning as I was leaving my dug-out I threw my helmet aside. I had a fairly long walk before me, the helmet is a bit heavy on a hot day, and as I said German gas was most unlikely. So I made up my mind to leave it behind. In view of what happened, it may appear imagination now, but a voice seemed to whisper loudly in my ear. 'Take your helmet with you; don't leave without it.' I turned back and slung it over my shoulder. Surely it was the warning voice of my guardian angel, for if I had not done so, you would never

have had this letter. Here was death in its most awful form sweeping down towards me. Thank God I had the one thing which could save me, but with a carelessness for which I ought to be scourged, I had never tried the helmet on and did not know if it were in working order. In theory, with the helmet on I was absolutely safe, but it was an anxious moment waiting for the scorching test, and to make things more horrible, I was absolutely alone. But I had the companionship of One Who sustained me in the hour of trial, and kneeling down I took the Pyx from my pocket and received the Blessed Eucharist as Viaticum. I had not a moment to spare, and had my helmet just fixed when I was buried in a thick green fog of poison gas. In a moment my confidence returned for the helmet worked perfectly and I found I was able to breathe without any ill effects from the gas.

"By the time I got down to the dressing station the guns had ceased fire, the gas had blown away, and the sun was shining in a cloudless sky. Already a stream of wounded was coming in and I soon had my hands full, when an urgent message reached me from the front trench. A poor fellow had been desperately wounded, a bullet had cut him like a knife across the stomach, with results you can best imagine. He was told he had only a few minutes to live, and asked if they could do anything for him. I have only one wish before I die, he answered, could you possibly get me Fr. Doyle? I'll go happy then. It was hard work to reach him, as parts of the communication trench were knee deep in water and thick mud. Then I was misdirected and sent in a wrong direction, but I kept on praying I might be in time, and at last found the dying man still breathing and conscious. The look of joy, which lit up his face when I knelt beside him, was reward enough for the effort I had made. I gave him Absolution and anointed him before he died, but occupied as I was I did not notice that a third gas attack had begun. Before I could get my helmet out and on, I had swallowed a couple of mouthfuls, which did me no serious harm beyond making me feel rather sick and weak.

"As I made my way slowly up the trench, feeling altogether 'a poor thing' I stumbled across a young officer who had been badly gassed. He had got his helmet on, but was coughing and choking in a terrible way. 'For Gods sake,' he cried, 'help me to tear off this helmet - I can't breathe. I'm dying.' I saw if I left him the end would not be far; I half carried and half dragged him up the trench to the medical aid post. I shall never forget that ten minutes, it seemed hours. I seemed to have lost all my

strength; struggling with him to prevent him killing himself by tearing off his helmet. It made me almost forget how to breathe through mine. I was almost stifled, though safe from gas, while the perspiration simply poured from my forehead. I could do nothing but pray for help and set my teeth, for if I once let go, he was a dead man. Thank God we both at last got to the aid post, and I had the happiness of seeing him in the evening out of danger, though naturally still weak."

It was a year later that he wrote the full story to his father about the gas attacks. "The fumes had blown away but a lot of gas was lying in the bottom of the trenches and as I bent down to absolve or anoint man after man for the greater part of that day, I had to inhale the chlorine fumes until I had nearly enough gas in my poor inside to inflate a German sausage balloon. I did not know then that when a man is gassed his only chance (and a poor one at that) is to lie perfectly still to give the heart a chance of fighting its foe. In happy ignorance of my state, I covered mile after mile of those trenches until at last in the evening, when the work was done, I was able to join my battalion in a village close to the line.

"It was only then I began to realise that I felt 'rotten bad' as schoolboys say. I remember the doctor who was a great friend of mine, feeling my pulse and shaking his head as he put me lying in a corner of the shattered house, and then he sat beside me for hours with a kindness I can never forget. He told me afterwards he thought I was a 'gone coon,' but at that moment I did not care much. Then I fell asleep only to be rudely awakened at four next morning by the crash of guns and the dreaded bugle call 'gas alarm, gas alarm.' The Germans had launched a second gas attack fiercer than the first. I did not take long to make up my mind what to do. Who would hesitate at such a moment, when the Reaper Death was busy? Before I reached the trenches I had anointed a number of poor fellows who had struggled back after being gassed and had fallen dying by the roadside.

"The harvest that day was a big one, for there had been bloody fighting all along the Front. Many a man died happy in the thought that the priest's hand had been raised in absolution over his head and the Holy Oils' anointing had given pardon to those senses which he had used to offend the Almighty. It was a long hard day, a day of heartrending sights, with the consolation of good work done in spite of the deadly fumes, and I reached my billet wet and muddy, pretty nearly worn out, but perfectly well, with not the slightest ill effect from what I had gone



through, nor have I felt any since.

"On paper every man with a helmet was as safe as I was from gas poisoning. But now it is evident many of the men despised the 'old German gas'. Some did not bother putting on their helmets, others had torn theirs, and others like myself had thrown them aside or lost them. From early morning until late at night I worked my way from trench to trench single handed the first day, with three regiments to look after, and could get no help. Many men died before I could reach them; others seemed just to live until I anointed them, and were gone before I passed back. There they lay, scores of them (we lost 800, nearly all from gas) in the bottom of the trench in every conceivable posture of human agony. The clothes were torn off their bodies in a vain effort to breathe; while from end to end of that valley of death came one low unceasing moan from the lips of brave men fighting and struggling for life.

"I don't think you will blame me when I tell you that more than once the words of Absolution stuck in my throat, and the tears splashed down on the patient suffering faces of my poor boys as I leant down to anoint them. One young soldier seized my two hands and covered them with kisses, another looked up and said 'Oh; Father, I can die happy now, sure I'm not afraid of death or anything else since I have seen you.'" Fr. Doyle continues his letter to his father.

"Don't you think, dear father that the little sacrifice made in coming out here has already been more than repaid, and if you have suffered a little anxiety on my account, you have at least the consolation of knowing that I have, through God's goodness, been able to comfort many a poor fellow and perhaps to open the gates of heaven for them."

After this terrible experience Fr. Doyle was glad to have a few days rest at the rear. For the first time in a fortnight he was able to remove his clothes, and he slept for thirteen continuous hours in a bed. He had, as he himself said, 'nearly reached the end of his tether.' For his conduct on the occasion he was mentioned in dispatches. His Colonel recommended him for the Military Cross but he was told that Fr. Doyle had not been long enough at the front. So he was presented with the Parchment of Merit of the 49th Brigade. On receiving this Fr. Doyle remarks "I hope the angels have done their work as well and that I shall get a little corner in their report to Head Quarters above." Fortunately, there is no

doubt about the latter point! Not angels only but human souls speeding heavenwards bore tribute to the self-sacrificing zeal of the soldier of Christ.

During the comparative lull which succeeded this attack Fr. Doyle was kept busy by the men, scraping their kettles as they expressed it. "I wish mine were half as clean as some of theirs," he adds. Thus on Sunday 14 May between 600 and 700 men went to Holy Communion. Once more he eulogizes his little flock. "One cannot help feeling proud of our Irish lads" he writes. "Everyone loves them. The French girls, naturally, that goes without saying. The shopkeepers love them for their simplicity in paying about five times the real value of the goods they buy. Monsieur le Cure would hug each and every one of them if he could, for he has been simply raking in the money these days, many a person putting three and five franc notes on the plate. This is to make up, I suppose, for the trouser buttons that others put on it. Surely our Blessed Lord loves them best of all for their simple, unaffected piety which brings crowds of them at all hours of the day to visit Him in the Tabernacle. Need I add that the Padre himself has a warm corner in his heart for his boys, as I think they have for him, judging by their anxiety when the report spread that he had got knocked out in the gas attack. They are as proud as punch to have the chaplain with them in the trenches. It is quite amusing to hear them pointing out my dug-out to strangers as they go by: "That's our priest with a special stress on our." For which assuredly the Fusiliers had good reason.

Fr. Doyle describes a visit to another wonder of the war, the Church of Vermelles. "It is just a heap of ruins: but hanging still on one of the broken walls is a large crucifix absolutely untouched. The figure is a beautiful one, a work of art, and the face of Our Lord has an expression of sadness like I have never seen before. The eyes are open, gazing as it were upon the scene of desolation, and though the wall upon which the crucifix hangs is riddled with bullet holes and shell splinters, the image is untouched save for one round bullet hole just through the heart. The whole thing may be only chance, but it is a striking sight, and cannot fail to impress one and bring home the fact that if God is scourging the world as it well deserves, He is not indifferent to the sorrows and sufferings of His children." Fr. Doyle describes a battle scene from the Somme; when the order came to advance. "The first part of our journey lay through a

narrow trench, the floor of which consisted of deep thick mud, and the bodies of dead men trodden under foot.

It was horrible beyond description, but there was no help for it, and on the half rotten corpses of our own brave men we marched in silence, everyone busy with his own thoughts. I shall spare you gruesome details, but you can picture one's sensations as one felt the ground yield under one's foot, and one sank down through the body of some poor fellow.

"Half an hour of this brought us out into the middle of the battlefield of some days previous. The wounded, at least I hope so, had all been removed, but the dead lay there stiff and stark, with staring eyes, just as they had fallen. Good God, such a sight! I had tried to prepare myself for this, but all I had read or pictured gave me little idea of the reality. Some lay as if they were sleeping quietly, others had died in agony, or had had the life crushed out of them by mortal fear, while the whole ground, every foot of it, was littered with heads or limbs, or pieces of torn human bodies. In the bottom of one hole lay a British and German soldier, locked in a deadly embrace, neither had any weapon, but they had fought on to the bitter end. Another couple seemed to have realised that the horrible struggle was none of their making, and that they were both children of the same God. They had died hand in hand praying for and forgiving one another. A third face caught my eye, a tall strikingly handsome young German not more, I should say, than eighteen. He lay there calm and peaceful, with a smile of happiness on his face, as if he had had a glimpse of Heaven before he died. Ah if only his poor mother could have seen her boy it would have soothed the pain of her broken heart.

"We pushed on rapidly through that charnel-house, for the stench was fearful, till we stumbled across a sunken road. Here the retreating Germans had evidently made a last desperate stand, but had been caught by our artillery fire. The dead lay in piles, the blue grey uniforms broken by many a khaki-clad body. I saw the ruins of what was evidently the dressing station, judging by the number of bandaged men about; but a shell had found them out even here and swept them into the net of death.

"A halt for a few minutes gave me the opportunity I was waiting for. I hurried along from group to group, and as I did the men fell on their knees to receive absolution. A 'God bless and protect you, boys' and I passed on to the next company. As I did, a soldier stepped out of the

ranks, caught me by the hand, and said; "I am not a Catholic, sir, but I want to thank you for that beautiful prayer."

The approach of Christmas meant the arrival of many presents to Fr. Doyle, which, needless to say found their way to the Dublins. According to Capt. Healy, Fr. Doyle appeared always with his pockets stuffed with sweets and cigarettes for the men. He writes, "the gift of 'smokes' was a God-send. The parcel arrived in the midst of the pelting rain which had been going on all day. I put on my big boots and coat, and trotted, or I should rather say, waded, up to the front line and gave each man a handful. You would not believe how it bucked them up or how welcome that smoke was to the brave fellows, as they stood there in mud and water, soaked through and through, hungry and sleepless. 'Sure, Father, its little enough to bear for our sins,' is the way the rough lads look at their hardships. Almighty God would be a queer God if He did not forgive and forget whatever they may have done, with such a spirit as this."

Fr. Doyle had the good luck of spending Christmas in billets. He got permission from General Hickie to have Midnight Mass for his men in the Convent; St. Anthony's Institute at Locre. The chapel was a fine large one, as in pre-war times over 300 boarders and orphans were resident in the Convent; and by folding-doors the refectory was added to the chapel and thus doubled the available room. An hour before Mass every inch of space was filled, even inside the altar rails and in the corridor, while numbers had to remain in the open. Word in fact had got around about the Mass, and men from other battalions came to hear it, some having walked several miles from another village. Before the Mass there was strenuous Confession-work. "We were kept hard at work hearing Confessions all the evening until nine o'clock," writes Fr. Doyle. "The sort of Confessions you would like, the real serious business, no nonsense and no trimmings. As I was leaving the village church, a big soldier stopped me to know, 'If the Fathers would be 'sittin' any more that night.' He was soon polished off, poor chap, and then insisted on escorting me home. He was one of my old boys, and having had a couple of glasses of beer, 'it wouldn't scratch the back of your throat, Father, that French stuff', was in the mood to be complimentary. 'We miss you sorely in the battalion' he said 'we do be always talking about you.' Then in tone of great confidence; 'Look Father, there isn't a man wouldn't give

the whole world, if he had it, for your little toe! That's the truth,' the fellow meant well, but 'the stuff that would not scratch his throat' certainly helped his imagination and eloquence. I reached the convent a bit tired, intending to have a rest before Mass, but found a string of the boys awaiting my arrival, determined that they at least would not be left out in the cold. I was kept hard at it hearing Confessions until the stroke of twelve and seldom had a more fruitful or consoling couple of hours work, the love of the little Babe of Bethlehem softening hearts which all the terrors of war had failed to touch."

The Mass itself was a great success and brought consolation and spiritual peace to many a war - weary exile. This is what Fr. Doyle says; "I sang the Mass, the girls choir doing the needful. One of the Tommies, from Dolphin's Barn, sang the Adeste beautifully with just a touch of the sweet Dublin accent to remind us of 'home sweet home,' the whole congregation joined in the chorus. It was a curious contrast: the chapel packed with men and officers, almost strangely quiet and reverent. The nuns were particularly struck by this, praying and singing most devoutly, while the big tears ran down many a rough cheek. Outside the cannon boomed and the machine-guns spat out a hail of lead. Peace and good will, hatred and bloodshed!

"It was a Midnight Mass none of us will ever forget. A good 500 men came to Holy Communion, so that I was more than rewarded for my work. On Christmas Day itself all was quiet up at the front line. The Germans hung out white flags all along their barbed wire and did not fire a shot all day, neither did the English. For at least one day homage was paid to the Prince of Peace."

Here is a description of a sick call in the early hours of 13 January 1917. "Two men are badly wounded in the firing line, Sir." I was fast asleep, snugly tucked up in my blankets, "you will need to be quick, Father, to find them alive." By this time I had grasped the fact that somebody was calling me, that some poor dying man needed help, that perhaps a soul was in danger. In a few seconds I had pulled on my big boots - I knew I would want them in the mud and wet - jumped into my waterproof, and darted down the trench.

The first man was in extremis when I reached him. I did all I could for him and commended his soul to the merciful God, as he had only a few moments to live. Then I hurried on to find the other wounded boy. I found the dying lad so tightly jammed into a corner of the trench that it

was almost impossible to get him out. Both legs were smashed, one in two places, so his chances of life were small, and there were other injuries as well. What a harrowing picture that scene would have made.

A splendid young soldier, married only a month they told me, lying there, pale and motionless in the mud and water with the life crushed out of him by a cruel shell. Then while every head is bared, come the solemn words of absolution 'Ego te absolvo I absolve you from your sins. Depart Christian soul, and may the Lord Jesus Christ receive you with a smiling, benign countenance. Amen."



**NO GREATER LOVE.**

Fr. Willie Doyle was killed at Frezenberg in the third battle of Ypres on 16 August 1917. Those who knew him were broken hearted. The first verse of a poem put together by men of the 8th Dublins follows.

He is gone from amongst us, may his soul rest above,  
The pride of our regiment whom every man loved,  
His life's work is o'er, he has finished his toil,  
So may God rest the soul of our brave Father Doyle.

Fr. Doyle was speeding all day, hither and thither over the battlefield like an angel of mercy; his words of absolution were the last words heard on earth by many an Irish lad that day, and the stooping figure of priest and father, seen through blinding blood, filled the glance of many in their agony. Perhaps once more some speechless youth ebbing out his life's blood kissed his beloved padre, or by a silent handshake bade farewell to the father of his soul. "Ah Father Doyle, Father Doyle, is that the priest? Thanks be to God for his goodness in sending you; my heart was sore to die without the priest." All the little stories come back to us as we try to reconstruct that last day of priestly ministry and sacrifice. We shall never know here below, for towards the evening of that heroic day Fr. Doyle died a martyr of charity. The great dream that had haunted him for a lifetime had come true, he shed his blood while working for Christ. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." St John 15;13 "The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep." St. John 10;11. Here is an extract from a letter written by a fellow chaplain, Fr. J Flynn S.J. shortly after the death of Fr. Doyle. "In the train somewhere here in France I met an officer of Willie Doyle's regiment...For one half hour in the crowded carriage he spoke the praises of poor Willie. That man, he said, was the limit. He wound up with a word that was new to me at least. He'd have died a martyr anyway, for he had made up his mind to go after the war to one of the leper settlements."

It seems most likely that the remains of Fr. Doyle who often risked his life to bury friend and foe, lie commingled with those of countless unnamed companions, beneath the plain of Ypres. Is not such a fate the consummation of his martyrdom? "Entice the wild beasts to become my tomb and to leave no trace of my body," writes Ignatius of Antioch. "So that falling asleep I may be a burden to no one. Then shall I be really a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world will not even see my body." "I beg of God whom I love," writes our own St. Patrick in his confession (59), "to grant me that I may shed my blood with those strangers and captives for His names sake, even though I be without burial itself or my corpse be most miserably divided limb by limb amongst dogs and fierce beasts, or the birds of the air devour it. I think it most certain that if this happen to me, I shall have gained my soul with my body." For Christ's sake Fr. Doyle shed his blood among strangers; his body was torn and devoured by those fierce beasts and birds of the air which man has diabolically invented for mutual slaughter. These are some military tributes to the soldier son of a soldier saint.

Sir Philip Gibbs writes "All through the worst hours, an Irish padre went about among the dead and dying giving Absolution to his boys. Once he came back to head quarters, but he would not take a bite of food or stay, though his friends urged him. He went back to the field to minister to those who were glad to see him bending over them in their last agony. Four men were killed by shell fire as he knelt beside them, and he was not touched, not touched until his own turn came. A shell burst close by and the padre fell dead."

Percival Phillips wrote, "The Orangemen will not forget a certain Roman Catholic chaplain who lies in a soldier's grave in that sinister plain beyond Ypres. He went forward and back over the battlefield with bullets whining about him, seeking out the dying and kneeling in the mud beside them to give them Absolution. He walked with death, with a smile on his face, watched by his men with reverence and a kind of awe until a shell burst near him and he was killed. His familiar figure was seen and welcomed by hundreds of Irishmen who lay in that bloody place. Each time he came back across the field he was begged to remain in comparative safety. Smilingly he shook his head and went again into the storm. He had been with his boys at Ginchy and through other times of stress, and he would not desert them in their agony. They remember him as a saint, they speak his name with tears."

Another report says, "many tales of individual gallantry are told, two instances especially which should be recorded: one being that of an officer of the Royal Army Medical Corps attached to the Leinsters, who spent five hours in circumstances of the greatest danger tending the wounded, and behaving in all ways with consummate heroism, and the other that of a Roman Catholic chaplain who went up with the men, sustained and cheered them to the last, until he was killed."

General Hickie says, "Fr. Doyle was one the best priests I have ever met, and one of the bravest men who have fought or worked out here. He did his duty, and more than his duty, most nobly, and has left a memory and a name behind that can never be forgotten. On the day of his death the 16th August, he had worked in the front line, and even in front of that line. He appeared to know no fatigue, he never knew fear. He was recommended for the Victoria Cross by his commanding officer, by his brigadier, and myself. Superior Authority, however, has not granted it and as no other posthumous reward is given, his name will, I believe, be mentioned in the Commander-in-Chief's Dispatch. I can say without boasting that this is a division of brave men, and even among these Fr. Doyle stood out."

Though Fr. Doyle cared nothing for human decorations - it was another Commander-in-Chief under Whom he served - it seems right to chronicle this judgement of others and to record the fact that he was recommended for the D.S.O. at Wytschaete and the V.C. at Frezenberg. However the triple disqualification of being an Irishman, a Catholic and a Jesuit, proved insuperable.

Lieut. Galvin writing home on 14 Aug. 1917 says "If ever a man earned the V.C. in this war, it is Fr. Doyle. He is simply splendid. He comes up every night under heavy shell fire, burying the dead and binding the wounded and cheering the men. I cannot refrain here from expressing my opinion that among the many glaring inconsistencies that disfigure the award of honours, none was more remarkable than the refusal of the V.C. to this chaplain, who merited it not once but twenty times."

On 15 Dec. 1917, General Hickie, having discovered Mr Doyle's address, wrote this tribute: "I could not say too much about your son. He was loved and revered by us all. His gallantry, self sacrifice, and devotion to duty were all so well known and recognized. I think that his was the most wonderful character that I have ever known."

"Strong point 13 and the little dug-out of the brave padre rise before me as I write" says an Irish officer in the Catholic News 15 Sept. 1917. "I recall the early Mass when our battalion was in reserve. Often have I knelt at the impromptu altar serving that Mass for the padre in the upper barn, hail, rain, and snow blowing in gusts through the shell torn roof. He knew no fear. As company officers, how many times have we accompanied him through the front line system to speak a word to the men. Well do we remember when at long last we went back for rest and training, how our beloved padre did the long three days' march at the head of the battalion."

"Which of the men do not recall with a tear and a smile how he went 'over the top' at Wytschaete? He lived with us in our newly won position, and endured our hardships with unfailing cheerfulness. In billets he was an ever welcome visitor to the companies, and our only trouble was that he could not always live with whatever company he might be visiting."

"Ypres sounded the death knell. Recommended for the D.S.O. at Wytschaete, he did wonderful work at Ypres, and was recommended for the V.C. Many a dying soldier on that bloody field has flashed a last look of loving recognition as our brave padre rushed to his aid, braving the fearful barrage and whistling machine gun bullets, to give his boy a last few words of hope."

Captain Healy 8th Dublins. "If a man was hit you would think he knew it by instinct, he was with the wounded man before anyone else was. It did not matter where the man was lying, out he went to him."

In its own way the following generous appreciation by a Belfast Orangeman is rather unique. It was published in the Glasgow Weekly News of 1 Sept. 1917. "Fr. Doyle was a good deal among us. We could not possibly agree with his religious opinions, but we simply worshipped him for other things. He didn't know the meaning of fear, and he didn't know what bigotry was. He was as ready to risk his life to take a drop of water to a wounded Ulsterman as to assist men of his own faith and regiment. If he risked his life in looking after Ulster Protestant soldiers once, he did it a hundred times in the last few days. The Ulstermen felt his loss more keenly than anybody, and none were readier to show their marks of respect to the dead hero priest than were our Ulster Presbyterians. Fr. Doyle was a true Christian in every sense of the word, and a credit to any religious faith. He never tried to get things easy. He



was always sharing the risks of the men, and had to be kept in restraint by the staff for his own protection. Many a time have I seen him walking beside a stretcher trying to console a wounded man with bullets flying around and shells bursting every few yards."

"He never tried to get things easy." Words conveying a truth deeper than this Ulster soldier could realise! May we not reverently recall St. Pauls sentence: "Having joy set before Him He endured the Cross"? Heb.12:2

A similar tribute was paid by Sergeant T. Flynn, Dublin Fusiliers, in a letter written to his mother on 18 August. "We had the misfortune to lose our chaplain, Fr. Doyle the other day. He was a real saint and would never leave his men, and it was really marvellous to see him burying dead soldiers under terrible shell fire. He did not know what fear was, and everybody in the battalion, Catholic and Protestant alike, idolised him. I went to confession to him and received Holy Communion from him a day or two before he was killed, and I feel terribly sorry after him.

"He loved the men and spent every hour of his time looking after them, and when we were having a fairly hot time in the trenches he would bring up boxes of cigarettes and cheer us up. The men would do anything he asked them, and I am sure we will never get another padre like him. Everybody says that he has earned the V.C. many times over, and I can vouch for it myself from what I have seen him do many a time. He was asked not to go into action with the battalion, but he would not stop behind, and I am confident that no braver or holier man ever fell in battle than he."

An even more convincing testimony was borne by a Fusilier who happened to be home in Dublin on leave at the time of Fr. Doyle's death. Meeting a friend who told him the news, he kept repeating incredulously "He's not dead, He couldn't be killed." When at last he was shown a paper describing the padre's death, the poor fellow knelt down on the pavement and began to pray. Then to the crowd who gathered round him he recounted how, when he was lying wounded in an exposed position and expecting every moment to be killed by a shell, Fr. Doyle had crept out to him and carried him to a place of safety.

A similarly spontaneous tribute was paid to Fr. Doyle's memory by a burglar, presumably an ex-soldier, who broke into Mr Doyle's house in Dalkey at midnight in January 1922. He made the poor old man get up and unlock all the drawers. In ransacking a drawer he came across a

mortuary card of Fr. Doyle. "Who's that" he asked excitedly. "That's my son, Fr. Willie Doyle, who gave his life for the soldiers in Flanders," answered Mr. Doyle. "That was a holy priest," replied the robber. "He saved many souls." Whereupon he took the card, kissed it, put it in his pocket, and fled!

The good Sisters of St. Anthony's Institute, Locre, who had always been so kind to Fr. Doyle, were anxious to have his remains, not realising the circumstances of his death. The Superioress wrote to Fr. Browne, a touching little note in rather broken English, on 21 August "What very sad news I have received. Our good brave holy Fr. Doyle has been killed! Compassionate Lord Jesus give him eternal rest. Rev. Fr. Browne will accept my condolence, my feelings of sympathy in the great loss of our good Fr. Doyle, your confrere. Notre petit saint, he has now received his recompense for his holy life, his great love for God and neighbour. Oh! he was so much loved by everybody and never will we forget him. We are all very glad to have him with us in the convent and to have made his life as comfortable as possible. Were it not possible, Rev. Fr. to bring his holy body to the convent? It were a great honour for us to have it. Yours most sincerely, Mother."

Fr. Browne himself had been with Fr. Doyle in Clongowes and Belvedere. He was intimately associated with him in their joint mission to the 48th brigade and expressed his grief and his esteem in a letter, written on 20 August, from which a passage may be quoted.

"All during these last months he was my greatest help, and to his saintly advice, and to his saintly example, I owe everything I felt and did. With him, as with others of us, his bravery was no mere physical show off. He was afraid and felt fear deeply, how deeply few can realise. And yet the last word said of him to me by the Adjutant of the Royal Irish Rifles in answer to my question, 'I hope you are taking care of Fr. Doyle?' was 'he is as fond of the shells as ever.' His one idea was to do God's work with the men, to make them saints. How he worked and how he prayed for this. Fine weather and foul he was always thinking of them and what he could do for them. In the cold winter he would not use the stove I bought for our dug-out. He scoffed at the idea as making it 'stuffy' - and that when the thermometer was twenty degrees below zero, the coldest ever known in living memory here. And how he loathed it all, the life and everything it implied, and yet nobody suspected it. God's Will was his law. And to all who remonstrated, the life and everything it

implied, and yet nobody suspected it. God's Will was his law. And to all who remonstrated, 'Must I not be about the Lord's business?' was his laughing answer in act and deed and not merely in word. May he rest in peace, it seems superfluous to pray for him."

Did you know that "I must be about my Father's business?" he would have asked us had we, prudent ones, expostulated with him that day for being foolhardy. "His Fathers business", not bloodshed and hate and strife, but mercy and brotherhood and reconciliation. He might of course, have stayed behind in Ypres or St. Jean. He could, had he wished, have kept out of danger. Perchance there were some who said, 'He saved others, himself he cannot save.' They were right. 'For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, and whoever for My sake, loses his life will save it. What does it avail a man if, after gaining the whole world, he has lost or forfeited himself?' 'For My sake - I tell you, as often as you did it for one of these My brothers, however lowly, you did it to Me.' Beyond and besides the great legion of ordinary workers, there is need of a handful of heroes, men who save others because they cannot save themselves. Nicely calculated prudence could not survive without some of the foolishness of the Cross. The death of a hero or a martyr is a higher achievement than mere continuance of physical life.

'Lord if it be thou' cried impetuous Peter, 'bid me come to thee upon the waters.' And Christ said 'come' to foolish Peter, while the prudent apostles remained in the boat. Surely, as Fr. Doyle on that August morning looked out on those undulating Flemish fields where shell-barrage and bullet-blasts laid low the advancing waves of brave men, surely he heard the Master's voice bidding him to come to Him upon the waters. And he came, with his great hearted faith he never doubted. "I am not foolhardy nor do I expose myself to danger unnecessarily, the coward is too strong in me for that, but when duty calls I know I can count on the help of one who has never failed me yet." How could he resist? Out yonder, in Verlorenhoek and Frezenberg and along the Hannebeke stream, the smashed and bleeding bodies of his fellows were lying. We go back to 10th August in his diary. "A sad morning as casualties were heavy and many men came in dreadfully wounded. One man was the bravest I ever met. He was in dreadful agony, for both his legs had been blown off at the knee. But never a complaint fell from his lips, even while they dressed his wounds, and he tried to make light of

his injuries. "Thank God, Father," he said "I am able to stick it out to the end. Is it not all for little Belgium?" The Extreme Unction, as I have noticed time and again, eased his bodily pain, 'I am much better now and easier, God bless you,' he said as I left him to attend a dying man. He opened his eyes as I knelt beside him. 'Ah! Fr. Doyle, Fr. Doyle,' he whispered faintly, and then motioned me to bend lower as if he had some message to give. As I did so, he put his two arms around my neck and kissed me. It was all the poor fellow could do to show his gratitude that he had not been left to die alone and that he would have the consolation of receiving the Last Sacraments before he went to God. Sitting a little way off I saw a hideous bleeding object, a man with his face smashed by a shell, with one if not both eyes torn out. He raised his head as I spoke. 'Is that the priest? thank God I am all right now.' I took his blood covered hands in mine and as I searched his face for some whole spot on which to anoint him. I think I know better now why Pilate said 'Behold the Man' when he showed our Lord to the people.

"In the afternoon, while going my rounds, I was forced to take shelter in the dug-out of a young officer of another regiment. For nearly two hours I was a prisoner and found out he was a catholic from Dublin, and had been married just a month. Was this a chance visit, or did God send me there to prepare him for death, for I had not long left the spot when a shell burst and killed him? I carried him out the next day and buried him in a shell-hole, and once again I blessed that protecting Hand which had shielded me from his fate.

"My poor brave boys! They are lying now out on the battle-field, some in a little grave dug and blessed by their chaplain who loves them all as if they were his own children." Having loved his 'poor brave boys' in this world and eased their passage to the next, he loved them to the end. And so, somewhere near the Cross Roads of Frezenberg, where he lies buried with them, the chaplain and men of the 48th Brigade are waiting together for the great Reveille.

**The IMPORTANCE of CONFESSION.**

In all Fr. Doyle's services to people, nothing gave him as much joy and consolation as hearing confession. In a letter to his father he invites him to come, in spirit, with him on a visit to the trenches. He describes a typical incident of his services to his fellow soldiers. This must have been as consoling to his father as it was to himself. "There is a party coming towards us down the trench and as they have the right of way, we must squeeze into a corner to let them pass. A poor wounded fellow lies on a stretcher with death already stamped on his face. The bearers lay their burden gently down. These rough men have the tender heart of a woman for the wounded. They reverently uncover their heads and withdraw a little as the priest kneels beside the dying man's head. A glance at the identity disk on his wrist, stamped with his name regiment and religion, shows that he is a Catholic, for there are few men, no matter what their belief who do not carry a rosary or a Catholic medal around their necks. I wonder what the non-Catholic padres think of this fearful increase of Idolatry! 'Ah, Father is that you? Thanks be to God for His goodness in sending you; my heart was sore to die without the priest. Father, oh, I am glad now, I always tried to live a good life, it makes death so easy.' The rites of the Church were quickly administered, it was hard to find a sound spot on that poor smashed face for the Holy Oils, and my hands were covered with his blood. The moaning stopped; I have noticed that a score of times, as if the very touch of the anointing brought relief. I pressed the crucifix to his lips as he murmured after me, 'My Jesus, mercy,' and then as I gave him the Last Blessing, his head fell back, and the loving arms of Jesus were pressing to his Sacred Heart the soul of another of his friends, who, I trust, will not forget, amid the joys of Heaven, him who was sent across his path to help him in his last moments. It is little things like this which help one over the hard days and sweeten a life which has little in it naturally attractive. If you had come up the trench with me twelve months ago on the morning of the gas attack and watched the same scene repeated hour after hour, I think you would have thanked God for the big share you have in the salvation of so many souls."

Here is a short sermon by Fr. Doyle, on confession, during a lull in the war. "A serious word. A matter of life and death, eternal life, the salvation or damnation of many depend upon it. Are you ready to face God? None of us is afraid, it has to come sometime, but, 'know ye not there is a judgement.' God won't be very angry about our sins. He knows our weakness. 'He is a patient and merciful God, but furious that we should appear before His holy Face covered with sin and every abomination when we could have got rid of all.

"The Wedding Garment. You know where you can find the white 'wedding garment,' find the pond of the Sacred Blood, where to wash stains away. Don't delay, Hell is full of people who said 'later on.' God help the person who, when the chance was there, did not make his peace with God.

"I am pleading for your immortal souls, it matters little in the end whether we have been rich or poor, lived lives of hardship or pleasure, but to save one's soul or lose it, matters much.

"It may be hard for some to square up accounts (not half as hard as you think) but a million times harder to burn in Hell, cursing your folly. Confessions will be heard from 4p.m. to 6p.m. in C. Hut."

Fr. Doyle writes. "During the month of May I made another effort to convert a really tough character, upon whom I had many times failed to make an impression. I saw it was useless to argue with him, so, at the beginning of the month, I handed him over to the Blessed Virgin as a hopeless case with which she alone could deal. Last evening I met him and thought I would try once more to make him see the awful danger he was running of losing his soul. It was all no use, the devil had his prey too tightly held to shake him off like that. Then a thought struck me. 'Look' I said 'this is the month of May; you surely won't refuse our Blessed Lady.' The poor fellow fell on his knees, and there and then made his confession. I gave him Holy Communion and now he is a changed man, as happy as a lark."

In Fr. Doyle's notebook there are some hastily written outlines of talks to his men, these were at the end of the year.

"The end of that life which God gave to be spent in his service. A solemn moment when we lie down for the last time and look back upon our life which is gone forever. A precious talent entrusted to us, not to misuse, or bury in ground, like slothful servants, but to spend to good use until the Master comes.



"What is true of the end of life is equally true of the end of a year. Another milestone of our journey to eternity. Just 365 days of a life, already so short, passed away. All of us have taken a big stride towards the hour of our death, and let us not forget it - the happiness and reward of Heaven. For a moment let us pause in the journey of life and look back. What strikes us?

(1) God's goodness. How many began last year well and strong, full of plans, now dead. How many a young life quenched on the battle field. All that time God's providence has watched over us and protected us from danger. His love surrounded us.

(2) Our opportunities. Life means more than the mere enjoyment of living, the time of sowing the seed of good works whose harvest we shall reap in heaven; as long as we live we can merit. Pile up treasures in Heaven and increase our happiness for all eternity. Holy Mass, Sacraments and prayers, every act we do for God means greater joy and glory.

(3) Our return. Walk back the road, our angel has kept the watch of every act. Tablets to mark spots where our acts were done. Piles of curses, bad language, rows of empty beer bottles with all the sins they bring. In a word, little good but much evil. A sad picture, but we must not lose heart. Last mile of march, tighten knapsack on back, pull ourselves together and step out more hardy for the last mile. For many the last mile of life. We shall make it worthy of Him so good to us - more prayers, duty better done, greater watchfulness over our tongues and our evil inclinations, so that we may exclaim, I have fought a good fight, done my duty to my country and my God - a crown of glory."

#### Third Sunday after Epiphany.

"Saddened and disappointed there is not a better response to Confession. A man who said he would go after the Boer War. All intend to go, 'later on.' Hell is full of men who said 'later on.'

"To-day's Gospel; St. Matthew 8:1-13 Leper, awful sight, image of sin. 'Lord, You can make me clean.' 'Go show yourself to the priest'. Christ says same now. He is longing to forgive the past; to wash away every iniquity: to make sins red as scarlet, whiter than snow. For the sake of

your immortal souls. Far harder to hear the awful words. 'Depart ye cursed, I know you not.' "

A letter about General Absolution for the soldiers on returning to the trenches. "I do not think that there can be a more touching or soul-inspiring sight than to see a whole regiment go down on their knees, to hear that wave of prayer go up to Heaven, as hundreds of voices repeat the Act of Contrition in unison. 'My God I am heartily sorry that I have offended You'. There is an earnestness and a depth of feeling in their voices, which tells of real sorrow, even if one did not see the tears gather in the eyes of many a brave man. And then the deep reverent silence as the priest raises his hand over the bowed heads and pronounces the words of forgiveness. Human nature is ever human nature, and even Irish soldiers commit sins. You can picture then, the feelings of any priest standing before that kneeling throng, knowing that, by the power of God, his words have washed every soul pure and white. I love to picture the foul garment of sin falling from every man there at the words of Absolution, and to watch the look of peace and happiness on the men's faces as they lift their rifles and fall into rank, ready for anything, even 'to meet the devil himself,' as my friend of long ago shouted as he marched by me. Don't you agree with me that the consolations and joys of my life far outweigh the hard things and privations, even if there were no nest egg being laid up in a better and happier world."

"Pray for all," Fr. Doyle once wrote, "but especially for sinners, and in particular for those whose sins are most painful to His Sacred Heart. With great earnestness recommend to His mercy the poor souls who are in their agony. What a dreadful hour, an hour tremendously decisive, is the hour of our death! Surround with your love these souls going to appear before God, and defend them with your prayers." In his mission work he relied greatly on prayers, for which he was constantly appealing to individuals as well as convents and schools."

"I cannot tell you," he writes "how grateful I am for your offering of Masses and prayers. It is what I call my 'ammunition' for the missions, which will mean the capture of many a poor sinner. If only you knew what a help and encouragement it is, I think you would be well rewarded and perhaps more anxious to aid the 'toilers in the vineyard,' who depend on prayer to bless their work and make it fruitful." "Pray for a hard case here." "A little prayer for a big fish of forty years whom I hope to land

to-morrow." "Get all the prayers you can, even an aspiration may save a soul"- these and suchlike requests occur constantly in his letters. "I am going to say a special Mass in future," he wrote 30 April 1911 "on the first Sunday of each month for all those who pray for my missions and retreats. I shall be grateful if you would kindly make this known." Again on the Feast of Corpus Christi, 1913 he had been hearing confessions on the day before from half past five in the morning until eleven at night: "I wish nuns could know the miracles their prayers work during missions in the hearts of poor sinners years away from God; it would make them do much more." "I think," he once said, "there are too many workers in most religious houses, but not half enough toilers on their knees."

He did not confine himself to asking the prayers of others, he also toiled on his own knees. During a mission or retreat he sought to increase and intensify his own prayer instead of curtailing it. "The more I have to do," he once wrote, "the greater I feel the need of prayer, so that between the two the poor sleep has a bad time." After an arduous day's work in the pulpit and confessional he would often spend a good part of the night before the tabernacle, cutting his sleep down to three or four hours. Thus during a mission in Drogheda the curate observed that Fr. Doyle, on emerging from his confessional at eleven o'clock at night, used to retire to the little oratory and remain on his knees before the Blessed Sacrament until the clock struck two. Yet he was always up and out of the house before anyone else was astir. On another occasion, during the mission in Newry, the curate receiving a sick call one night, went into the chapel which was dark, and there he stumbled over the prostrate form of Fr. Doyle, who was evidently spending the night in prayer. Not only in theory, then, but also in practice, he was "convinced that all work for God must in the main be barren without holiness" and that "the want of prayer" was "the weak spot in most priestly lives." Fr. Doyle said "there is no more powerful means of converting souls than prayer."

We now look back to a brief description by Alfred O'Rahilly of the studies and formation of a Jesuit. Two years in the novitiate, seven years in the colleges, three years at philosophy, three years at theology - it is a long professional course. But it is not yet completed. St. Ignatius did not consider the Jesuit fully formed, until in addition to the two years noviceship, he has undergone a third year of probation, or a tertianship,

as it is called. Having completed the diligent task of cultivating the intellect," the constitutions tell us, "those who have been engaged in studies, must, during the time of the last probation, more diligently exercise themselves in the school of the heart and devote themselves to spiritual and corporal things which help towards progress in humility and in the abnegation of all sensual love as well as of their own will and judgement and also towards a greater knowledge and love of God. So having progressed in themselves, they may better help others towards spiritual progress for the glory of God our Lord."

In October 1907 he went to Tronchiennes, Ghent, Belgium to make his tertianship. On his way he visited Paray-le-Monial, the home of Saint Margaret Mary and said Mass at the altar where our Lord appeared so often to that Saint. Then he visited Ars, to whose saintly Cure, Saint John Vianney, he had a special devotion. After an adventurous journey on a very primitive steam tram he found himself in the spot hallowed by the Cure of Ars. Fr. Doyle insisted on seeing everything, the room in which the saint died, the half burnt curtains said to have been damaged by the devil, the little pan in which the holy man cooked the flour lumps which he called cakes. He was allowed to sit in the Cure's confessional, and above all he was able to say Mass at his shrine, using the saint's chalice. Just above the altar reposed the Cure's body in a case of glass and gold. "It gave one a strange feeling" wrote Fr. Doyle, "to see the holy old man lying before one during Mass, calm and peaceful with a heavenly smile on his face, just as he died fifty years ago." "I shall never forget my visit to Ars," he concluded; "I knew all about the Blessed Cure's life, so that each spot had an interest and charm for me."

The retreat lasted thirty days of "spiritual exercises," and three "repose days," from 10 Oct. to 13 Nov. In a letter to his father, he describes, with his usual humour, the Retreat, from which we take one incident. You go to bed as usual at nine, and then, just as you are in the middle of your best dream, a wretch, a perfect villain you think him, puts his head into your room just as all the clocks of Ghent are booming twelve and says, "Benedicamus Domino." (Let us bless the Lord). By all means you say, but would it not do to bless Him between the blankets? The psalmist says, Let them rejoice in their beds! You feel it is rather too much of a good joke, but you remark this pleasure only comes once in a lifetime; and so you tumble out on the cold floor (my carpet must have gone off for spring cleaning) and jump into your clothes as quickly as you can, for

the midnight air in Belgium has a sting to it. However the hour passes quickly and then one dive for the blankets, though I felt much more inclined for breakfast. Four o'clock came around very quickly. I think there is something amiss with the clocks here. But in spite of it all and the undoubted strain of the continued retreat, I do not feel one bit the worse and I feel a good deal better in the spiritual life.

During the Tertianship, it is customary to allow the young priests to try their prentice hand at some missionary work. Fr. Doyle helped in Aberdeen under a great missionary Fr. Matthew Power, S.J. who formed a high opinion of his younger colleague. This he expressed in a letter written after Fr. Doyle's death "he proved conclusively to me, his senior, and to all the local clergy and people, that he was a Jesuit missionary to the manner born, and this from the very first sermon he preached. Every day he grew in the affection of the Aberdonians until we parted, to his great grief and mine. "Fr. Doyle also expressed his great regard for Fr. Power.

In a letter Fr. Doyle says "there are many things funny and consoling, which I could tell you about the mission. One lady who wanted me to sanction a very shady proceeding, bluntly expressed her great annoyance: Really, Father, this is very disappointing, I was looking forward to this Mission for I thought Jesuits were men of the world. What she intended to say was she thought they had no consciences. On the last evening another lady came to me and said. 'Father, I want to thank you for the great happiness you have brought to one home in Aberdeen. My daughter has been in great trouble for a long time and for years has longed for someone to whom she could open her heart. You cannot imagine the joy in that house to-night, and I promise you a grateful mother's prayers as long as I live."

Fr. Doyle was invited to give a mission in Yarmouth which he described in a letter to his father on 20 April 1908. "The mission closed last night with a grand flourish of trumpets, renewal of vows, and general scorching of the Old Boy's tail, not to speak of one lady's hat, who when I told all to raise their lighted candles, calmly thrust hers into the middle of a flower garden which she carried on her head. She was gallantly rescued from the destruction by a young officer behind her; perhaps that encounter may have had a happy ending."

Fr. Doyle tells a story about a mission in Aberdeen. "I had a strange experience which seemed providential. In my wanderings through the

slums I came across by accident an old woman over ninety who had not entered a church for long, long years.' I have led a wicked life she said, but every day I asked God to send me a good friend before I died and I feel now my prayer is heard.' The next day I came back and heard her confession, and brought her Holy Communion on Easter Sunday. As the tears streamed down her old withered face she said, 'Oh, Father, this is the first happy day of my life, for I have never known what happiness is since I was a child.' I could not help feeling that the opening of heaven to that poor sinner was a reward more than enough for all the long years of preparation now passed."

Once, while giving a mission in a seaport town, he came across a retired sea-captain who had not practised his religion for years. All efforts to induce him to attend the mission and go to the sacraments seemed fruitless. Fr. Doyle visited him day by day but found him growing more sullen and obstinate. One afternoon the missionary called as usual; but no sooner had he entered the sitting-room than the captain jumped to his feet and, seizing a large knife that lay on the table, rushed at his unwelcome visitor, shouting, "I'll make an end of you and your annoyance." Fr. Doyle took a step forward and presented his breast for the blow, calmly looking his assailant in the face, The infuriated man hesitated, his arm dropped nervelessly to his side, and he immediately said in a broken voice: "Father, you've won; I'll go to confession to you."

Fr. Doyle himself, in a letter to his sister, describes two other instances of sudden conversion which occurred during a mission in 1911: "During the mission I heard, by accident, of two men who had been away forty years and fifty two years from their duties. One was a hopeless, the other a desperate case, upon whom missionary after missionary had tried his hand in vain. they were so bad that the priests of the town did not even mention them among the people to look up. It was only waste of time they said. Clearly no ordinary course of action would do here; and so our Lord having, as I said, accidentally made the poor souls known to me, put the following thought into my head. I went to the Blessed Sacrament and had a straight talk with the Sacred Heart. 'You have promised to give priests the power of touching the hardest hearts. I am going to take You literally at Your word, to put You on Your trial. If You will soften these two 'hard nuts' I will never doubt this promise again. Remember now You are on Your trial for nothing will convert them except a miracle of grace.' Somehow I felt that the battle was already



won, and that though the Sacred Heart was going to give me the happiness of reconciling these poor souls, the work of conversion was to be all His. I set off with great confidence to visit number one, an old Papal Zouave, but I was not prepared for what followed. I had been told that he had no faith, etc., etc. To my question if he were attending the mission came the startling answer, "Father for the past few days I have been thinking seriously of it." "Will you come to confession?" I asked, for I saw it was now or never. I will he replied. I shook hands and left him, for I was more moved than he was. After the sermon I heard confessions and waited for X, but no X came, as I half expected. Dinner hour next day saw us together again. "I kept my word Father, I was at the sermon, but fear seized my heart and I ran out of the chapel." Poor fellow, I felt for him but he had to face the music. "Come now," I said, "down you go on your marrow bones." I quickly ran him through his confession, gave him absolution and left the old fellow sobbing like a child, with sorrow and joy, beside his bed. Some one else's eyes were not dry either, and I asked myself which of the two had received the greater grace. Next morning X made his Easter Duty before the 1,700 men who filled the church. That evening when I came out to preach I found my friend X sitting prominently inside the altar rails, which had been reserved for the 'quality,' glorious in his Sunday best, with a flaming red tie and a flower in his button hole. It was his own idea of reparation, and an acceptable one, was it not, to the loving, merciful Heart of Jesus.

"I need not say that this visible sign of God's goodness gave me great courage and confidence in tackling number two, and I wanted it judging from what I had heard. I went down one night to his house and was met at the door by a sour, cranky, crabbed old man who made no secret of the fact that I was a most unwelcome visitor. I was not wanted and the sooner I took my departure the better. In fear and trembling I got in somehow, he leaving the door wide open that I might lose no time in departing. I sat down uninvited, my friend stood and glared at me, snorting. The very helplessness of my case appealed to me, for I felt that all human power was out of the question here and that even the Sacred Heart had a hard task to face in tackling this beauty. I found that he was a well-read man who had travelled a good deal as an iron worker and had lived for a long time in of all places - Sheffield. I was at home at once, having spent holidays with my sister who was married to Frank

Whelan in Sheffield. We talked Sheffield for an hour; and though he did not sit down, I saw he was thawing, for 'Sir' was now added to his laconic Yes and No which eventually reached 'Your Reverence' once. As I left him, for of course there was no word about religion this time, he actually said 'God bless you,' his first prayer I suppose, for years. I went home glad, thinking I had done well. How little I suspected that the old boy was hard at work and that my troubles had not begun.

I could not get to him until Sunday, the closing day of the mission. I found the old man crouching over the fire looking fifty times as black and as fierce as before. What had happened? I had not long to wait. "You brought me bad luck with your visit," he cried. "I went back to work to find I was sacked for nothing, and I have nothing before me now except starvation or the workhouse." Then came the usual tirade against God, the rich, etc. My heart sank, for if he was hard before, he was hopeless now Yet I was glad of the change which had taken place, for this would be a real triumph for the Sacred Heart. However, I soon saw that all I said only angered him more, and yet something told me that if I let him slip now he might never get the chance of salvation again. Talk about playing a twenty pound salmon in the river, it was nothing to the tussle with that poor soul! It was only when all was over that I realised what a strain it was for I felt perfectly sick.

"I could only say one prayer, Lord you are on Your trial, remember Your promise. To be honest I was nearly in despair for it seemed I was only doing more harm than good. He was becoming more insulting and openly told me to leave him alone. 'You are not the first,' he sneered, 'who has tried this game, and you won't succeed where the others have failed. I have made up my mind, it is too late to change now. I will die as I have lived. I know as well as you do that I shall go to hell, but that is my business and does not concern you, leave me alone.' It was the darkest hour.

"I could only think of the promise of the Sacred Heart 'I will give priests the power of moving the hardest hearts', and this was a hard one God knows. Lord remember Your promise, was all I could say, for the devil was working might and main and knew I was leaving in the morning. Suddenly grace struck him; he turned to me and said quietly, 'I will tell you what has kept me out of the church so long.' He had magnified the importance of a trifling thing and had pictured all sorts of obligations which he could not face. A few words cleared all that

away. "You have lifted an enormous weight off my mind," he said. The rest was easy. He promised to come to confession, and though I offered to hear him there and then, he said he would sooner do it like a man and would be at the church at nine after the closing of the mission.

"Nine came, half past, and no sign of him, when a girl came up and said Mr. Z has been walking up and down the square opposite for the past half an hour. It was the last effort of the devil. I went out and took the poor fellow by the arm, when he told me he was absolutely unable to set foot inside the door. Our chat did not last long, the load of fifty years fell from his soul, and Holy Communion in the morning sealed his reconciliation with Almighty God. The Sacred Heart had kept His promise.

"Now" concluded Fr. Doyle "I am afraid you will think all this is egoistical, but it was precisely because I felt and still feel that I had no hand or part in these conversions, except being the happy instrument, that I tell it to you, for it was from start to finish, the work of our Merciful Saviour."

In Drogheda in 1913 during a mission, he relates. "What I look on as a grace was told to me yesterday. A little child speaking of the missionaries here said: 'I like Fr. Doyle best because he is holy.' The words cut me like a knife and wound round and round my soul till I could have cried with the pain of it. And this because of the loving compassion of Jesus who covers over my wretched faults and magnifies in people's eyes the tiny good I do, misleading them when he cannot deceive me, and then because that little sentence contained a lifetime of pleading on the part of Jesus for holiness from me as an infallible means of drawing souls to Him. As long as I can remember He has kept that one idea before me. It is ever ringing in my ear; it comes to me at times with overpowering force, but never with such a thunder-clap as when He had sent an innocent child to tell me what He had said so often, that it is not learning or eloquence or any other natural gift which will do His work, but that holiness alone will open the way to every heart and lead all captive to His feet."

Whether we take his own view of his lack of cooperation with grace or whether we regard him as redolent of holiness, there is no doubt that Fr. Doyle possessed an extraordinary influence such as we usually attribute to prophets or saints. Grace indeed seemed to go out from him. "I have not met a single refusal to come to the mission or to confession so far

during my missionary career", he once wrote in a confidential letter. "Why should there be one because Jesus for some mysterious reason seems to delight in using the most wretched of all his priests as the channel of his grace? When I go to see a hard hopeless case, I cannot describe what happens exactly, but I seem to be able to lift up my heart like a cup and pour grace and love of God upon that poor soul. I can see the result instantly, almost like the melting of snow." It would almost seem as if the exerting of spiritual influence were a sensible phenomenon to the writer of such lines. This outflowing of grace was also sensible to others. Here is an extract from a letter of an officer who met Fr. Doyle when he was an army chaplain.

"You need not worry any longer about my poor soul, as you call it. I came across a Jesuit, a Fr. Willie Doyle, out here, and he settled up my accounts with the Lord. Fr. Doyle is a splendid fellow. He is so brave and cheery. He has a wonderful influence over others and can do what he likes with men. I was out the other evening with a brother officer, and met him. After a few words, I said: 'This is a pal of mine padre, he is a protestant, but I think he would like your blessing.' Fr. Doyle looked at my chum for a moment with a smile and then made the sign of the cross on his forehead. When he had passed on my pal said "that is a holy man. did you see the way he looked at me? It went right through me. And when he crossed my forehead I felt such an extraordinary sensation."

Fr. Doyle writes on August 5th 1916. "As I marched through Ypres at the head of the column, an officer ran across the road and stopped me. 'Are you a Catholic priest?' he asked, 'I should like to go to confession.' There and then, by the side of the road, while the men marched by, he made his peace with God, and went away, let us hope, as happy as I felt at that moment. It was a trivial incident, but it brought home vividly to me what a priest was and the wondrous power given him by God."

Christmas Eve 1916, Midnight Mass was arranged in the convent in Locre, where Fr. Doyle used to spend his rest days when relieved by Fr. Browne, who writes, "I remember how decent Fr. Willie used to be, coming up early on the relief days before his Battalion came up, in order that I might get away. He knew how I hated it, and I did not hate it half as much as he did. We used generally to confess each other before leaving. We were very exact about waiting for each other so that the Brigade would have a priest all the time in the line."



Confessions were heard on Christmas Eve by the two priests, Fr. Doyle writes. "We were kept hard at work hearing Confessions all the evening until nine o'clock, the sort of Confessions you would like, the real serious business, no nonsense and no trimmings. I reached the Convent a bit tired, intending to have a rest before Mass, but found a string of the boys awaiting my arrival, determined that they, at least, would not be left out in the cold. I was kept hard at it hearing Confessions till the stroke of twelve and seldom had a more fruitful or consoling couple of hours' work, the love of the little Babe of Bethlehem softening hearts which all the terrors of war had failed to touch."

Fr. Doyle in a sermon on Heaven dated 25th July told his men, "religion is the biggest and only true consolation, and the source of real courage. I reminded them of the saying of the Cure of Ars: 'When we get to heaven and see all the happiness which is to be ours for ever, we shall wonder why we wanted to remain even one day on earth. God hides these things from our eyes, for if we saw now 'the things God has prepared for those who love Him,' life on earth would be absolutely unlivable, and so I said the man who falls in the charge is not the loser but immensely the gainer, is not the unlucky one but the fortunate and blessed. You should have seen how the poor chaps drank in every word, for rough and ignorant as they are, they are full of faith, though I fear their conception of an ideal Heaven, for some at least, would be a place of unlimited drinks and no closing time. There was a broad smile when I told them so."

## PRIESTLY SANCTITY AND REPARATION

Fr. Doyle realised the dignity of the priesthood and the close co-operation it implies with our Lord's redemptive work. This ideal of co-sacrifice with Christ leads naturally from an appreciation of the sublime function of the priesthood to the idea of a spiritual crusade, extending and supplementing the sacerdotal work and atoning for the inevitable negligences and even scandals which occur in its performance. This is the devotion which, during the last three years of his life, strongly took hold of Fr. Doyle, namely, prayer for priests to aid them in their ministry and reparation in atonement for the negligences and infidelities of those whose calling is so high. St. Teresa exhorts her nuns to this apostolate of prayer. "Try to be such," she says, "that we may be worthy to obtain from God for His priests, that our Lord may protect them in their great warfare, so that they may escape the many dangers of the world." She considered that her Carmelites, enjoying the seclusion and immunity of the cloister, owed this duty to the Church Militant. This ideal is still more conspicuously enshrined in some religious institutes, particularly in the society of the Daughters of the Heart of Jesus. These sisters are "to ask by fervent prayers, by sufferings and even by their lives, if necessary, for the outpouring of grace on the Church, on the Catholic priesthood and on religious orders." In his Brief to Mgr. van den Berghe, 14 March 1872, Pope Pius IX welcomed the new foundation. "It is not without consolation of heart," said the Pope, "that we have heard of your plan to arouse and spread in your country that admirable spirit of sacrifice which God apparently wishes to oppose to the ever increasing impiety of our time. We see with pleasure that a great number of persons are everywhere devoting themselves entirely to God, offering Him their lives in ardent prayer, to obtain the deliverance and happy preservation of His Vicar and the triumph of the Church, to make reparation for the outrages committed against the divine Majesty, and especially to atone for the profanations of those who, though the salt of the earth, lead a life which is not in conformity with their dignity." And on 17 August 1908 Pope Pius X indulgenced "a form of consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to be recited by the clergy," part of which reads as follows. "Have mercy,

good Pastor, especially on any priests, our brethren who, walking in the vanity of their own sense, have by their deplorable defection saddened Thee and Thy beloved spouse, the Church. Grant us to bring them back to Thy embrace, or at least to expiate their crimes, to repair the loss and by the consolation of our love to lessen the pain which they inflict on Thee."

The seal of the Church has therefore been set on this apostolate of prayer and reparation. There is, needless to say, no question of pride or presumption, no attempting to judge others. It is merely the just principle that those who are specially shielded and privileged should aid those actively - religious, priests, brothers and sisters, who have great responsibilities and a difficult mission, and should, by their faithfulness, atone for the shortcomings of those who are exposed to greater temptations. Cardinal Mermillod says "more than ever we should console the wounded Heart of Jesus, to pray for the priesthood, and by immolation and adoration, without measure or truce, to give our Saviour testimony of affection and fidelity." Of course in all this there may creep in some spirit of censorious self-sufficiency, though indeed there is not much danger of it in the hidden humble lives of those 'victim souls' who are devoted to the secret apostolate of prayer for God's ministers and reparation for those scandals and infidelities which occur from time to time in the Church. It has, therefore, seemed right to show briefly here, by way of preface to Fr. Doyle's private notes, how explicitly this work of priestly sanctification and reparation has been recognised by the Church and adopted by saints and mystics.

Fr. Doyle not only practised this devotion himself but propagated it among chosen souls. "I want your help for a project I have very much at heart," he says in a letter dated 13 July 1913. "I see more and more each day how different the world would be if we had more really holy priests. With this object I have started a crusade of prayer." He writes in another letter 8 December 1915, "I believe that our Lord is asking for victims who are willing to suffer much in reparation for sins, especially those of priests. I know some who go so far in their generosity as to do heroic penance, feeling He asked it. I know the result has been wonderful grace and a burning desire to suffer and suffer and always to suffer for Jesus' love."

This ideal appealed greatly to Fr. Doyle. On 28 July 1914, the anniversary of his Ordination, he wrote. "At Exposition Jesus spoke

clearly in my soul, 'Do the hard thing for My sake because it is hard.' I also felt urged to perform all my priestly duties with great fervour to obtain grace for other priests to do the same, e.g. the Office, that priests may say theirs well."

On the Feast of St. Teresa, October 1914, there is this simple but eloquent record. "Last night I rose at one a.m. and walked two miles bare footed in reparation for the sins of priests to the chapel at Mullagh (Co. Clare), where I made the Holy Hour. God made me realise the merit of each step, and I understood better how much I gain by not reading the paper; each picture, each sentence sacrificed means additional merit. I felt a greater longing for self-inflicted suffering and a determination to do more 'little things.'

During his 1914 retreat this ideal came home to him as a special mission. "The great light of this retreat, clear and persistent," he writes on 1 December, "has been that God has chosen me, in His great love and through compassion for my weakness and misery, to be a victim of reparation for the sins of priests especially, that hence my life must be different in the matter of penance, self denial and prayer, from the lives of others not given this special grace. (They may meritoriously do what I cannot) Unless I constantly live up to the life of a willing victim, I shall not please our Lord nor ever become a saint. It is the price of my sanctification that Jesus asks this from me always and in every lawful thing, so that I can sum up my life 'sacrifice always in all things.'" In the words of St. Catherine of Siena "washing away their foulness with your tears."

On the following Christmas Day 1914 Fr. Doyle records a further step. "During midnight Mass at Dalkey Convent I made the oblation of myself as a member of the League of Priestly Sanctity. During my preparation beforehand a strong conviction took possession of me that by doing so, I was about to begin the 'work' which ---- had spoken of. Our Lord gave me great graces during the Mass and urged me more strongly than ever to throw myself into the work of my sanctification, that so I may draw many other priests to Him. He wants the greatest possible fervour and exactness in all priestly duties."

The League of Priestly Sanctity, to which reference is here made, was founded in the North of France in the year 1901, under the direction of Pere Feyerstein, S.J. who died in 1911. Fr. Doyle became the Director -

General for Ireland and strove to spread the League among Irish priests. In an explanatory leaflet which he issued, it is described as "an association of priests, both secular and regular, who, in response to the desire of the Sacred Heart, strive to help each other to become holy and thus render themselves worthy of their sublime calling and raise the standard of sacerdotal sanctity." Two special objects are enumerated: "(1) The assistance of priests, and especially those of the League, in living a life worthy of their high calling.

(2) The atonement for outrages to the Sacred Heart in the Sacrament of His love. This Sacrament, needless to say, is committed to priests in a special manner, and there ought to be a priestly expiation for irreverence, negligence, and particularly sacrilegious Masses, which the Divine Heart has to endure from the very ministers of His altar." (Pope Pius X granted in 1909, a plenary indulgence once a month to priests who undertook this oblation of priestly reparation).

Fr. Doyle had this League very much at heart and had prepared several schemes for its spread and improvement when his appointment as military chaplain interrupted the work. But while engaged in this sphere of activity, the ideal of a life of reparation remained uppermost in his mind and once more the special form which it took was expiation for the negligences and sins of God's anointed. He recorded this resolution on 26 July 1916. "During a visit, our Lord seemed to urge me not to wait until the end of the war, but to begin my life of reparation at once, in some things at least. I have begun to keep a book of acts done with this intention. He asks for these sacrifices.

(1) To rise at night in reparation for priests who lie in bed instead of saying Mass.

(2) To make as many aspirations as possible

(3) To give up illustrated papers.

(4) To kiss floor of churches.

(5) Breviary always kneeling.

(6) Mass with intense devotion. The Blessed Cure of Ars used to kneel without support while saying the Office. Could not I?

"This is my vocation" he notes on 8 February 1917, "reparation and penance for the sins of priests, hence the constant urging of our Lord to generosity" "Kneeling on the alter steps at X," he writes on 12 April 1917, "Jesus told me to devote one day of each week to the work of

sanctification and reparation for His priests in each part of the world, e.g. Monday for the priests of Europe, etc."

Appropriately enough the last entry in his diary was made on 28 July 1917, the tenth anniversary of his ordination. Fr. Doyle's last recorded thought was about his sacrificial ideal of priestly immolation: "I have again offered myself to Jesus as his victim to do with me absolutely as He pleases. I will try to take all that happens, no matter from whom it comes, as sent to me by Jesus and will bear suffering, heat, cold, etc., with joy as part of my immolation, in reparation for the sins of priests. From this day I shall try bravely to bear all 'little pains' in this spirit. A strong urging to do this."

An explanation of the reference to the 'work' in a previous extract from Fr. Doyle's diary will help to make clear the increasing predominance of this ideal in his life. When he was tempted to break a resolution, or when he shrank from some sacrifice, he used to say five times to himself, "Will you refuse to do this for the love of Jesus?" By means of aspirations he sharpened his will into instant action and brought into play all the accumulated motive-power of the past. "This morning," he writes in his diary Sept. 1915 "I lay awake powerless to overcome myself and to make my promised visit to the chapel. Then I felt prompted to pray; I said five aspirations and rose without difficulty. How many victories I could win by this easy and powerful weapon!" Indeed he had a wonderful idea of the value of aspirations as a source of grace and merit. During the last few years of his life Fr. Doyle's conviction of the value of aspirations steadily grew, and with him to believe was to act. The following aspirations, jotted down in one of Fr. Doyle's notebooks, seem to have been favourites of his.

(1) My Crucified Jesus, help me to crucify myself.

(2) Lord teach me how to pray and pray always.

(3) My loving Jesus within my heart, unite my heart to Thee.

(4) Heart of Jesus, give me your zeal for souls.

(5) My God, Thou art omnipotent, make me a saint.

An incisive, one might say militant, method of spirituality appealed very much to the fervent heart and chivalrous courage of Fr. Doyle. He believed in marshalling all his forces for the immediate present, in concentrating his energies on the holiness attainable here and now. In this strain he writes on the Feast of the Blessed Cure of Ars, 4 August



1913. "Making my meditation before the picture of the Blessed Cure, he seemed to say to me with an interior voice. The secret of my life was that I lived for the moment. I did not say, 'I must pray here for the next hour', but only 'for this moment'. I did not say, 'I have a hundred confessions to hear,' but looked on this one as the first and last. I did not say, 'I must deny myself everything and always,' but only 'just this once.' By this means I was always able to do everything perfectly, quietly and in great peace. Try and live this life of the present moment. Pray as if you had nothing else whatever to do. Say your Office slowly as if for the last time. Do not look forward and think you must often repeat this act of self-denial. This will make all things much easier." Two years later we find a similar entry. "No sacrifice would be great if looked at in this way. I do not feel now the pain which is passed, I have not yet to bear what is coming; hence I have only to endure the suffering of this one moment, which is quickly over and cannot return." The Cure of Ars tells about a little boy in bed, covered with sores, very ill and very miserable. I said to him 'my poor child, you are suffering very much.' He answered me 'No sir, to-day I do not feel the pain I had yesterday, and to-morrow I shall not suffer from the pain I have now.' " In a letter from the Front, Fr. Doyle remarked. "That lad was a philosopher, but he never had to live in a trench, I bet."

Fr. Doyle's love of aspirations grew as time went on, but he did not allow this practice to interfere with his daily duties. He imposed new duties on himself, but he did so deliberately in the interest of his work, not in spite of it, and he did not regard his personal practice as the standard for others. "No one is holy who is not fervent," he writes. "But the fervour of the holy is not an impetuous novitiate first-fervour, which does not and cannot last; it is not a fervour that multiplies resolutions and piles up pious practices that bow one to the ground in disgust and despair; it is not a fizzling ginger-beer fervour that disappears as soon as it appears, it is an ardent desire inspired by reason in the accomplishment of duty."

1 May 1916. Fr. Doyle writes "Jesus said to me 'You must make your life a martyrdom of prayer,' This means that I must give every moment to aspirations etc., generously banishing idle thoughts in which I indulge so much. I feel Jesus asks this in reparation for His priests. With the help of our Blessed Lady I have this day begun the big fight." It is said of St.

Alphonsus Liguori; "his aspirations were so frequent, that his days were full with acts of love."

From a privileged penitent, in whose supernatural illuminations Fr. Doyle had come to believe, he had received a message that our Lord had a special 'work' for him to do. In a letter dated 7 July 1914, he describes how it occurred to him to interpret this work as the sanctification of priests and how very practically, he realised that it must begin with his own sanctification.

"I have often wondered," he writes, "what Jesus meant by the 'work' but I could never bring myself to ask you what you thought it was, for I knew if this message really came from Him, He would make clear what He wanted done in his own good time. Yesterday I was writing in my room a thought which had come to my mind: 'Is there not something wrong with a priest who constantly feels the need of amusement and distraction?' I suppose I was only putting in words the grace He has given me. Worldly amusements are nearly always a torture to me, while it is a perfect joy, a comfort and recreation. to spend an hour with Him. As I was writing that sentence quoted above without a thought of you or anything in particular, suddenly it flashed into my mind as clearly as if someone had spoken the words at my elbow, 'The work I want you to do is the sanctification of My priests through retreats.' "Now my dear child," he continues, I know well that one must not attach too much importance to what may be only a passing thought, due to many causes, still I must not conceal from you that the peace and consolation which came with this inspiration was very great, and the longing for great holiness most intense. Somehow I seemed to realise too that the retreat I have in my mind, and the standard of perfection I hope, with God's grace, to set before His priests will bring down on me much ridicule, but that, at the same time, the seed will fall on the good soil of many hearts He is now preparing, and will mean a new life of great sanctity to many. I know from experience that the material to work on is magnificent, but the standard of perfection is deplorably low. Surely there cannot be a grander work than this, but if it is to be done as Jesus wishes, it calls for a state of perfection which, without any exaggeration, I know well I am far from having reached."

The correspondent to whom this letter was addressed was intimately acquainted with Fr. Doyle's thoughts on this subject and has given to Alfred O'Rahilly the following statement.

"In response to inspirations received directly and indirectly from Jesus, he strove, notably for seven or eight years before he died, to 'put on Jesus Christ,' to model his life on the 'Priest-Christ,' to be as far as it was humanly possible, 'another Christ.' This was the secret spring of his holiness. It was not a simple attraction, nor a mere fad, but a forming of a life of priestly holiness, distinctly asked for and expressed by Christ. He heard with attention the first invitation: 'Model your life on Mine, lead a perfect life.' And, as if to secure a faithful response, Jesus seemed in the year 1910 to have planted in his heart a spark of divine love. This was the 'sweet wounding,' a grace like that received by St. Teresa, of which he complained. It made him understand Christ's love for His priests and His - almost helpless - dependence on them for the sanctification of souls. Jesus infused into his soul some of His own passionate love for souls, and it was this passion that made him at times seem to do rash things. It was the 'charity of Christ' that urged him, and he did nothing through mere caprice or impulse. As a matter of fact, he hated penance as being opposed to his natural gaiety of disposition; his sensitiveness to pain made him shrink even from a pin-prick. But there was no choice. He promised to be the friend of the Great Friend, to be as far as possible a priest like the Great Priest, to live as He lived and to die as He died - for the priesthood and for souls. The padre offered his life for the sanctification of the priesthood as Christ offered His life for the Church. 'When you hear of my death,' he wrote, 'you will know that I died for them.' Christ asked penance and death in reparation; but He asked personal priestly holiness to serve as an example to other priests. Attachment to the Person of Jesus, so that as he had loved, others too would learn to love, not as the ordinary good Christian loves, but as intimate friends should love their Friend and Master."

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

"What else are the servants of the Lord," asks St. Francis of Assisi, "but His Minstrels to lift up the hearts of men and move them to spiritual gladness?" Fr. Doyle always enjoyed a joke; the story is told about an incident in a boat in Donegal Bay. Fr. Doyle was out on the bay with four fellow Scholastics. One of them sitting in the stern, took out his watch to regulate the time for examen. Just as he said, "we begin now" Fr. Doyle who was sitting in the bow with a gun in his hand, fired both barrels into the air, shouting "Go!" The oarsmen nearly fell out of the boat with the shock.

### **Tribute from a Sister of Mercy.**

"Fr. Doyle used to visit his sister who was a nun in the Convent of Mercy, Cobh, of which I also was a member. Though I had seen him several times, it was not until his farewell visit before starting for the Front that I had my first interview with him. His sister asked me to go to the parlour and bid him good-bye. When doing so I said to him laughingly. "For goodness sake, Father, give me a blessing that will drive the spirit of tepidity out of me." I knelt down and he gave me a long blessing and laid his hands on my head. I cannot describe what I felt but I rose from my knees dazed and as it were in a dream. I went straight to the chapel and there kneeling before the Tabernacle I realised as never before that I was far from being a fervent religious, and with this realisation there came a great desire to become one. That blessing effected a greater change in my life than all the retreats I had made or spiritual helps I had received during my twenty years of religious life. From that time until his death I received five letters from him on matters relating to my soul and had several spiritual talks with him. During one of these I told him that I thought there was something God wanted me to give up but that I was not very willing to do so. He asked, "Do you really think God wants it from you?" I replied "Yes." He just said one word, "Well?" and at once it appeared unthinkable that I could refuse it to our Lord. That one word was more convincing to me than all the lectures I had heard or books I had read on self-sacrifice and mortification. It was the same with everything he said or wrote to me.

There seemed to be an unction and irresistible power in it. He spoke and wrote with the greatest simplicity, yet every word seemed to come from our Lord Himself and made a deep and lasting impression on me. It was as if, like his Master, virtue went forth from him. He seemed to be in God's presence even when conversing with people on indifferent topics, while his childlike humility and utter absence of self were most striking and seemed to me to be the outcome of his union with and all-absorbing love of God."

### **Missions and Retreats.**

Testimonies to his success as a missionary are numerous. "The results of your mission," wrote a parish priest, "have exceeded my anticipations and all previous experiences. Indeed the people speak of it with awe, as of a miraculous manifestation and veritable outpouring of grace." "Your retreat here has been a wonderful success," says another letter, "it has completely changed many. People are still talking about it, and better still, living up to its lessons." "I can't tell you," wrote a parish priest after his death, "how we all loved him in Dundalk. The people could never get enough of him, and asked to have him back again and again. I wanted him here when I came, but he was just starting for the Front." "Father," said a man at the end of a mission, "it was the holiest mission we ever had." This tribute of Fr. Cullen S.J., written in a private letter 27 August 1917 is worth recording. "Poor Father Willie Doyle's glorious death came as a great grief to me. Poor fellow, he was ready always, and so he is gone with hands full of works to his long rest on the Sacred Heart which he loved so dearly and worked for so tirelessly."

Though Fr. Doyle accomplished so much on the general missions, he found more congenial work in giving retreats, especially to religious communities. During his first two years on the mission staff he was chiefly engaged in giving retreats to sodalities and religious communities. Here was fruitful soil for the self-denial and penance, the love of God and of perfection, which were his constant themes, and for whose easy attainment he had many plans and holy devices. He made a deep impression wherever he went, and soon he was much sought after. During one summer he received more than forty invitations from religious communities to give them their annual retreat. From the very many testimonies to the good he effected a few typical sentences

may be quoted.

"No retreat ever made a deeper impression on the community, or raised the tone of the house to such a high level of spirituality, as that conducted by Fr. Doyle."

"A saintly old laysister wept the whole retreat tears of joy, saying she had never in her whole forty five years in religion felt and seen so visibly the effects of grace in herself and others."

"Many said they never realized before what religious life meant, but that now they were going to give God everything."

"Rev. Mother told the Bishop that no retreat for the past forty years had made such an impression."

Fr. Doyle excelled as a director of souls, to help holy people to sanctify their lives, "Let the holy ones be sanctified still" Apoc. 22,11. He was polite and respectful to people. Those whom he helped felt that he had a real interest in them. He spoke with homely directness. He would say, there are three D's which you ought to avoid, the Doctor, the Devil, and the Dumps. You can cheat the doctor and run from the devil, but the dumps are the 'divil!' He thought that holiness was helped by a sense of humour. In giving retreats he often used slides, which help the imagination. One of his favourite aspirations was, "Omnipotent God make me a saint." This and other aspirations he had printed on small pink leaflets parodying a well known advertisement."Father William's pink pills for pale saints," or "intended to make pale souls ruddy with the love of God."

### **Discouragement**

In his direction of souls Fr. Doyle received many letters which built up a heavy load of correspondence. He took this work very seriously, even though he found it very time consuming. Judging by the number of letters dealing with discouragement, it must be the besetting sin of those who are striving towards holiness. Doubtless sometimes it shows a secret pride and over-reliance on our own unaided efforts; we are quite surprised and hurt that we do not do better; we are irritated by the discovery of our faults, especially if others share that discovery. Discouragement such as this is not dissipated by harsh sincerity nor



excised by drastic spiritual surgery; it must be converted into humble childlike trustfulness in Christ who knows our weakness and our difficulties, who sees them from our side and not as human critics do.

Another form of discouragement lies in that natural human shrinking from struggle and suffering, such as Our Lord felt in Gethsemane. He, who chose three companions to be near Him and prayed for the passing of the bitter chalice, knows well what it is to be sorrowful, sad and fearful. Surely He does not begrudge human counsel and companionship to those who begin to fear and be heavy. "The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak." St. Mark 14.38. Hence it is that a discerning and sympathetic director can do so much for one who is faithful, but discouraged, acting as "an angel from heaven strengthening him." St. Luke 22.43. The pith of Fr. Doyle's advice can be put in these two short sentences of his. "When you commit a fault which humbles you and for which you are really sorry, it is a gain instead of a loss." "Recognize God's graces to you, and instead of thinking of yourself and your faults, try to do all you can for God and love Him more."

#### **Here are some further excerpts from his letters**

(A). "There is one fault in religious which should not be forgiven either in this world or in the world to come, and that is discouragement; for it means we are playing the devil's game for him "his pet walking stick," someone has called it. Thank God, we have not to judge ourselves, for as St. Ignatius wisely remarks, no one is a Judge in his own case. Let me judge you, my child, as I honestly think God judges you. My verdict must be that you have grown immensely in holiness during the past few years. To begin with, every particle of merit - and there must be millions of them since you first entered religion - is waiting for you in heaven. In spite of your sufferings and weak health, you have worked on and struggled on from day to day, a life which must have pleased God immensely. Don't lose heart, my dear child, the darkness you feel is not a sign of God's displeasure, for every saint has gone through it. You are 'minting money' every instant you live, you are helping to save soul after soul each hour you suffer. So you should say with St. Paul, 'I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation.'" 2 Cor. 7.4. July 1913.

(B). "In spite of all our efforts, we fall into faults from time to time. God permits this for two reasons:

(1) to keep the soul humble and to make it realise its utter powerlessness when left alone without His fostering hand, and

(2) because the act of sorrow after the fault not only washes it completely away, but immensely increases our merit, and being an act of humility bringing us really heartbroken to His feet, delights Him beyond measure." April 1913.

(C). "Our Lord is displeased only when He sees no attempt made to get rid of imperfections which, when deliberate, clog the soul and chain it to the earth. But He often purposely does not give the victory over them in order to increase our opportunities of meriting. Make an act of humility and sorrow after failure, and then never a thought more about it. He sees what a 'tiny little child' you are, and how useless even your greatest efforts are to accomplish the gigantic work of making a saint. But this longing, this stretching out of baby hands for His love, pleases Him beyond measure; and one day He will stoop down and catch you up with infinite tenderness in His divine arms and raise you to heights of sanctity you little dream of now." May 1913.

(D). "Are you not foolish in wishing to be free from these attacks of impatience, etc.? I know how violent they can be, since they sweep down on me at all hours without any provocation. You forget the many victories they furnish you with, the hours perhaps of hard fighting, and only fix your eyes on the little tiny word of anger, or the small fault, which is gone with one 'Jesus forgive me.'" April 1912.

(E). "I hope by the time you receive this you will have realised how foolish it is of you to bother about anything, no matter what it may be, in your past confessions. Generously make the sacrifice of never thinking or speaking of them again. You may do so with an easy conscience when you act under obedience. God wants to have your soul in a state of perfect peace and calm, for only then will He be able to fill it with His love and dwell there undisturbed." May 1912.

## Kindness

"Charity shows itself in thoughtfulness, in unselfishness, in deeds. Fr. Willie Doyle and I were together at St. Mary's Hall during philosophy. I don't remember that his personality impressed me. I don't remember his appearance even. but I do remember this, that when an act of kindness was to be done, Willie Doyle was there to do it. I do remember the words of grateful fellow-philosophers. "It is easy to see Willie Doyle is in the house." It is a pretty good test of true charity if after thirty years one remembers such things." These memories from Fr. J. Jagger, S.J., at the Stonyhurst retreat, 1928.

## Alleged Favours and Cures

Numerous Favours and cures have been attributed to the intercession of Fr. Doyle and to the use of his relics. The following are a few among many that have been reported:

(1) An Irish Jesuit Father owing to illness had been unable to say Mass for many months. This grieved him very much, and he expressed his regret when writing to a relation, a nun in South America, telling her of his ill-health. Some weeks later, on 9 December, he experienced a sudden change for the better. Next day he felt even stronger, and for several days the improvement continued. He informed his Rector of what was happening and expressed the belief that he would soon be able to say Mass again. The Rector questioned him and, having satisfied himself that there was a great improvement in the invalid, said he might say Mass on 17 December if he felt strong enough. 17 December came and Mass was said without difficulty. After his thanksgiving the Father went to his room where he found a letter waiting him from his relative in South America. After expressing regret at his illness and inability to say Mass the writer said she had obtained permission from her Superior for the whole Community to begin on 9 December a novena to Fr. Doyle, to whom they all had great devotion, that he might be able to say Mass on the day the novena ended, which would be 17 December.

(2) A little girl of twelve had been suffering very much from her eyes for several months. Treatment by the doctor seemed only to increase the

malady, and finally scales formed over the eyes making the child almost blind. A neighbour who had heard much about Fr. Doyle and had been given one of his relics by the nuns of the convent of the town, asked the mother of the child to make a novena to Fr. Doyle for the cure of the little one, offering to lend her the relic to be applied to the sore eyes each day. The novena was begun that evening. On the fourth day as the child awoke in the morning she cried out that her eyes were "grand," on examining them, the mother found to her surprise that the scales had disappeared completely and the eyes were quite clear and well again.

(3) A priest was dying of consumption in a hospital of San Francisco, both lungs, according to the doctors, being hopelessly diseased. A relic of Fr. Doyle was placed on the affected part and a novena for his recovery begun. The patient was so weak that he could only thank by a look. On the third day of the novena, however, there was a marked improvement in his condition. Before the novena ended he was able to get up and shortly afterwards to say Mass. A couple of weeks later he left the hospital and took up work in his parish again.

(4) A Protestant lady, the wife of an English colonel, fell sick. Her case was pronounced hopeless by the doctors. Her sister in law, a convert, who had read the life of Fr. Doyle and had been much impressed by it, procured one of his relics. This was kept in the sick room and prayers were offered for a cure through the intercession of Fr. Doyle. Almost at once a change for the better took place, and in a short time the sick lady completely recovered.

(5) The Superioress of a convent in South Africa writes under date 12 July 1922. "One of our community had for some time been seriously ill in a sanatorium. One evening I got a telephone message to say Sister was on the point of death and that the doctor declared there was no hope unless a change took place at once. I called the community together and we knelt down and asked Fr. Doyle to send a change for the better by seven o'clock. It was then 6.30 p.m. Next day I went up to the sanatorium. The infirmarian came out to meet me and her first words were. 'Sister is out of danger. The change came in time.' I asked at what hour. 'Seven o'clock last evening,' was the reply. I had promised Fr. Willie to have Masses said if he got our request granted, and that day I arranged for a number to be said in thanksgiving."

(6) A nun in a convent in Krugersdorf, Transvaal, was, shortly after her profession, attacked by rheumatism which completely crippled her. A



novena to Fr. Doyle was begun in the novitiate for her cure, and before its conclusion she was able to go about and do her work again.

This nun attributes her vocation to Fr. Doyle. In December 1922 she wrote. "A little over a year ago I came on a visit to the convent in Krugersdorp. I had visited several convents in the country, but this one looked the most lonely and unhomey convent I had ever seen. Entering religion was at the time the last thought in my mind. As the bad weather made it impossible to be out of doors, one of the sisters gave me a book to read. It was the life of Fr. William Doyle S.J.

I began to read and was hardly half way through the book when my vocation stood out clear before me. I must enter religion, and in this 'unhomey' convent. I went to the Superioress and begged to be admitted. After the usual preliminaries, my request was granted and I entered on 2 December 1921. I received the Holy Habit the following June and am now a six months old, very happy novice. I am absolutely certain I owe my present happiness to Fr. Doyle".

(7) Extract from a letter written by an Australian nun to Rev. C. Doyle S.J.:

"At the end of the year 1921 our Mother J. in our Adelaide house was very ill with a huge swelling on her neck, the trouble being with some ear complaint. She was very much run down at the time; her weakness was so great that the doctor expected the worst. The swelling, it was feared, would attack the brain, and if she ever recovered she would be mentally impaired. She did not know her danger herself, but had been invoking Fr. W. Doyle, whose life she had been reading, to bring about her cure. The sister who was caring for her had one of the relics you sent out to X. some years ago. She put it on her, and from that moment she began to improve until she was completely cured. At the present moment she is quite well".

(8) Continuation of the same letter.

"Another sister in the Adelaide community was cured about the same time of a diseased tongue. The tongue was one huge sore, and the cause could not be ascertained. One day the Superior called in an old nun, who had recently joined the community, to look at the tongue. She produced a relic of Fr. Willie Doyle, got her to put it on; from that moment she got better, and is now quite well."

(9) An old man of eighty, who had emigrated from Kerry and come to San Francisco where he had made a large fortune, had not been to the sacraments for forty years. All efforts to induce him to practise his religion had failed, and the last priest who had visited him had been turned away with insults and told there was no God and that no satisfactory proof that there was could be given. A Carmelite convent in the neighbourhood which heard of this began a novena to Fr. Doyle for the conversion of this poor sinner. Before the novena was ended the man sent for a priest and made his peace with God. He then began the Nine First Fridays for the grace of a happy death which took place soon after he had completed them.

(10) This is a letter from a chaplain with the British Army of the Rhine, (this must have been an army of occupation after the war) "A German Princess came to me yesterday with the request that I would get her a relic of Fr. Doyle. The Princess is a convert, and she has no doubt that Fr. Doyle has done wonders for her soul. There were many and seemingly unsurmountable difficulties in the way of her conversion, but Fr. Willie, when appealed to, removed them one by one in a truly marvellous manner. It is encouraging to know that even an army chaplain can become a saint, but I fear the standard Fr. Willie set is too high a one for many of us. I was astonished to hear from the Princess that a new phrase has been coined in German for an act of self denial such as Fr. Willie was glad to do. I did not quite catch the phrase, but I shall try and get it for you. Still more strange is it that Fr. Doyle is well known in Saxony, an intensely Protestant Province, from which this lady comes."

The above letter brings to mind a letter of Fr. Doyle's saying how he was able to help a prisoner. "A German prisoner, badly wounded in the leg, was brought in. He knew only a few words of English, but spoke French fluently. I try to do all I can for the unfortunate prisoners, as sometimes not much sympathy is shown them, and they have evidently been drilled into believing that we promptly roast and eat them alive. I gave him a drink, made him as comfortable as possible, and then seeing a rosary in his pocket, asked him was he a Catholic. 'I am a Catholic priest' I said 'and you need not have any fear' 'Ah, monsieur', he replied 'you are a true priest'. He gave me his home address in Germany, and asked me to write to his parents. I hope to get a letter through by means of the Swiss Red Cross, which will be a comfort to his anxious parents,

who seem good pious souls." What a consoling little picture of Christian charity rising above human strife and passion. What an insight into the noble peace mission of "a true priest." There are a number of other references to Fr. Doyle's kindness to prisoners of war. This must be the reason why he was remembered in Germany.

There lies the secret of Fr. Doyle's popularity - his Christlike democracy. With him there was neither Jew nor Gentile, neither officer nor private, all were men, human beings, souls for whom Christ died. Every man was equally precious to him, beneath every mud begrimed unkempt figure he discerned a human personality. He would risk ten lives if he had them, to bring help and comfort to a dying soldier no matter who he was. Once he rushed up to a wounded Ulsterman and knelt beside him. "Ah Father" said the man, "I don't belong to your Church," "No," replied Fr. Doyle, "but you belong to my God." To Fr. Doyle all were brothers to be ministered unto. "He that will be first among you shall be your servant, even as the Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life as a redemption for many." St Matthew 20:27.

### Waiting for the Battle

Fr. Doyle writes, "There were many touching incidents during these days; one especially I shall not easily forget. When the men had left the field after the evening devotions, I noticed a group of three young boys, brothers I think, still kneeling saying another rosary. They knew it was probably their last meeting on earth and they seemed to cling to one another for mutual comfort and strength, and instinctively turned to the Blessed Mother to help them in their hour of need. There they knelt as if they were alone and unobserved, their hands clasped and faces turned towards heaven, with such a look of beseeching earnestness that the Mother of Mercy surely must have heard their prayer: 'Holy Mary pray for us now and at the hour of our death. Amen.' "

Oh! for the peace of a perfect trust,  
My loving God, in thee;  
Unwavering faith that never doubts  
Thou choosest best for me.

### Mother's Death.

Fr. Doyle's mother died at 7 a.m. on 19 March 1915, at the age of 83. Fr. Willie had just returned from a Mission in Glasgow and so was able to be with her at the end and to say Mass immediately for her. In the following year, in a letter from the Front (17 March 1916) he writes to his father: "I shall not forget the anniversary on Sunday, though I doubt if she needs our prayers."

### Little Nellie

In February, 1911, when giving a retreat in Cork, Fr. Doyle visited the grave of 'Little Nellie of Holy God.' He says "Kneeling there I asked her what God wanted from me, when I heard an interior voice clearly repeating, 'Love Him, love Him.' The following day she seemed to rebuke me, when leaving the cemetery, for the careless way I performed most of my spiritual duties, and to say that God was dis- pleased with this and wanted great fervour and perfection in them."

Little Nellie was a great lover of Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist. She received her First Holy Communion at age of 4 yrs. and 3 mths. Fr. Bury S.J. heard her confession, and got the Bishop's permission. "May God enrich with every blessing all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls, proposing Little Nellie as their model." ( Pope Pius X. 4 June 1912 ).

The joyous strains of the First Communion Hymn echoed.

O Mary, dearest Mother,  
In God's sweet scented bowers,  
Will you gather for a little child  
A wreath of fragrant flowers.

### Chorus:

I wish my heart to be  
A cradle fair and gay,  
where my Blessed Jesus may repose  
On my First Communion Day.

It is now dedicated to Pius X, and called Nellie's First Communion Hymn.

## COMMENTS ON CONFESSION

Taken from Fr. William Doyle S.J.

"Without frequent confession and absolution, how could we keep our consciences pure and healthy and our souls refreshed with God's forgiveness? "

(Prof. Alfred O'Rahilly in Fr. William Doyle S.J. 1930 p.332)

"If there is nothing else known to me of the Catholic church, but her system of confession as I know it by experience, it would be enough alone to prove to me her divine origin."

(Bishop Gore and the Catholic claims 1905 p.120 Dom J. Chapman.)

"By confession our accounts with evil are periodically squared and audited, so that we may start the clean page with no old debts inscribed, any Catholic will tell us how clean and fresh and free they feel after the purging operation."

(Varieties of Religious Experience, 1902 p.128 William James.)

Confessions while on reserve, before the storming of Wytshaete.

"The men have absolutely no human respect, and kneel in rows waiting for their turn. I am sure non-Catholics must wonder what on earth we are at."

(Fr. Willie Doyle, letter 3rd June, 1917.)