

"WHAT HAS POOR BELGIUM DONE TO GERMANY?"

"Tortured in Consciences," Cries Mercier in Plea to Von Bissing to Send Belgian Clergy to Minister to Prisoners Held in Germany

Explanatory Comment

THE month of May, 1915, began a new chapter in the war's history. Italy at last entered the conflict. The Lusitania was sunk. Neutral indignation was aroused. The tragedy of the Dardanelles was in progress.

The reactions of these momentous events are observable in the relations of Cardinal Mercier and Governor General von Bissing. Both the priest and soldier wrote with particularly spirited candor. Von Bissing's tone was no longer oily and spurnously deprecatory. It was bullying and exultant. The letter in which he threatens to break off correspondence with the Cardinal reflects the self-satisfaction which all Germany was taking in the banner blunder of her war-making—the destruction of the Cunarder Lusitania on May 7, 1915.

The crime was not mentioned, for the Governor General seldom discussed military or naval events with the primate, but it is clear that the Germans were infatuated with their own infamy, which they mis-called boldness. Under such circumstances a Belgian Cardinal who persisted in speaking the truth was decidedly offensive to the engineers of "Weltmacht."

Von Bissing was out of patience with his constant defeats at the hands of an irrepressible patriot. He sought, if possible, to avoid relations which so often placed him in awkward positions.

The Cardinal, on the other hand, was undecayed by the false glamour which the Germans saw in the Lusitania outrage. He knew that the shame of it was undying and his deep spirituality inspired him doubtless to pin his faith on the principle of just atonement. Furthermore, his sense of realities must have told him that Italy's participation in the war was by that time inevitable and that the consequences of that act were of the highest import.

He minced no words in urging humane treatment for imprisoned priests and insisted categorically that Belgian chaplains be permitted to join the Belgian army. If Von Bissing believed he had won a victory by refusing the requested passports, he erred in forecasting a severance of relations unless the Cardinal were more "courteous." Mercier's fearless reply ended that threat. The correspondence went on until the Governor General finally became too ill to hold office.

Mercier was inexhaustible. He championed the right through the administration of three German Governors General. When the end came the Teuton authorities, then on slippery ground, did most of the supplicating.

the chaplain should know both French and Flemish.

In case there be any suspicion at the back of your Excellency's mind to deter you—this reminds me of the expression "unter anderem" of the dispatch No. 1883—I give you my word of honor that the priests in whose favor I ask for a passport will be chaplains and have no other purpose in view than to act as such.

Priests Forbidden to Say Mass

A distressing situation, your Excellency, to which I would respectfully draw your attention, has been brought to my notice. When priests happen to be in solitary confinement in St. Giles they are forbidden to celebrate or even to hear mass. On Easter Sunday F. Van Bambeke and the Cure Cuyllis were deprived of this consolation, of which a Catholic and a priest alone can, in my opinion, estimate the value. Nevertheless, the service of our prison cells is organized in such a manner that it is materially impossible for the inmates to communicate with one another in the chapel.

It is permissible to hope that Catholic prisoners may have facilities for attending mass at least on Sundays; that priests may be able to celebrate mass daily, and that all may have the consolation of a visit from the prison chaplain?

I hope that your Excellency will not consider out of place the earnestness with which I plead for the religious interests of my fellow countrymen. I do so to quiet my own conscience, for in the spiritual realm I am responsible for their direction.

Please accept, sir, the assurance of my sincere esteem.

(Signed) D. J. CARDINAL MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

*Note—The German text to which reference is made runs as follows: "Wenn ich mich um meine Belagerten nicht bereit erklären kann, den Wunsch Eurer Eminenz zu erfüllen, so leitet mich dabei unter anderem der Gesichtspunkt, dass auch hier in Belgien sich schon einiget Mangel an Geistlichen fühlbar gemacht hat."

The Governor General of Belgium, Brussels, S. No. P. A. I. 2150, May 1st, 1915.

To His Eminence Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines.

Your Eminence has again asked permission for certain priests to cross the frontier in order to go and serve as chaplains in the Belgian army. I regret to be unable to recommend this request to the competent authorities. The state of war in which we find ourselves renders it altogether impossible.

Regarding the second request contained in your Eminence's letter, I am quite ready to intrust the pastor of the German mission at Brussels, Father Leyendecker, with the spiritual interests of the Belgian ecclesiastics interned at St. Giles. Father Leyendecker is known to your Eminence; he speaks French and Flemish. I must also say that I am of opinion that these priests should have facilities to say mass.

I offer to your Eminence the expression of my sincere esteem and I have the honor to be your devoted servant.

(Signed) BARON VON BISSING,
Major General.

"New Check to Religion"
Archbishop's House, Malines, May 14th, 1915.

To His Excellency Baron von Bissing, Governor General, Brussels.

Sir—The letter dated May 1st (No. 2150) with which your Excellency has honored me and which unavoidable circumstances have prevented my answering earlier has brought about in my mind, I must say, an unpleasant disillusionment.

If I have insisted on obtaining a passport for four chaplains destined to fill the gaps which have taken place in our chaplaincies, it is because I could not succeed in fathoming the reason for the first refusal I met with. Relying on the candor of my two requests, I expected marks of particular benevolence.

All I can do, therefore, is to record a new check to religion in Belgium.

Several representatives of German authority do not, I fear, appreciate at its full value the importance attached by the Catholic conscience to confession. Otherwise they would not obstinately refuse us the sanction solicited by us already so often, both by word of mouth and in writing, to send to our prisoners detained in Germany a few priests speaking their language and to whom they could with full freedom open their consciences.

Will you kindly reflect a moment, sir, that for

eight months thousands of Belgians, solely because they have served their country with honor, are confronted with the moral impossibility of setting their consciences at rest? Catholic confession reaches the inmost recesses of the soul, and the German authorities wish the avowal it exacts, humiliating enough as it is, involuntarily or not, to be made to a man who reminds his penitent of the power of the oppressor, the responsible author of his captivity.

Is that humane? Is that Christian?

"Tortured in Consciences"

What then has poor Belgium done to Germany to be tortured on its own soil, to have its property destroyed, and the lives of its most inoffensive sons cruelly sacrificed; and now finally to be tortured in the consciences of those whose patriotism has borne them into exile and imprisonment?

And yet the general headquarters cannot allege any "necessity of war" for refusing our prisoners the free exercise of their religion.

If it exacts that the German chaplains should be replaced by priests from a neutral country, Holland has promised to supply them.

Even if it exacts that these priests should have no communication with the outer world, Belgian priests will carry charity to the point of heroism, and declare that they are ready to share the internment of their fellow countrymen till the day of general liberation comes.

Can one reasonably ask for more?

To my last request in favor of those detained in the St. Giles prison, your Excellency answers that you agree to it, provided the ministry be carried on by Father Leyendecker, of German nationality.

I am personally acquainted with Father Leyendecker and hold him in high esteem. But why inflict on Belgian chaplains an unmerited privation?

The Catholic mass, composed as it is of ceremonies and of Latin words, gives no room for any direct communication between the priest and the faithful; and hence provides the celebrant with no opportunity for taking an unfair advantage of his ministry.

For the practice of sacramental confession, a German chaplain, whatever may be his personal merits, incurs the objection which I have noted above. I know the priestly zeal of Father Leyendecker and his experience of men too well to suspect that he cannot understand the disquietude of my countrymen's souls and will not help me to plead with you for their liberty of conscience.

Not "Ordinary Criminals"

Will your Excellency kindly make a new endeavor to obtain for prisoners of war in Germany the liberty of practicing their religious faith without superhuman efforts?

Your Excellency has had the kindness to allow the imprisoned priests to celebrate mass; this is a mark of signal benevolence on your part for which I am exceedingly grateful and a thing which all the priests interested will highly value.

Lastly, will your Excellency please consider that the Belgians arrested in Belgium by the German authorities are not "ordinary criminals," but for the most part citizens beyond reproach—victims of what by the prisoner is called "patriotism" and by the detaining power "the inevitable laws of war"? Will you spare them, in the name of humanity, all unnecessary severity, and authorize the accused, after they have been examined, to receive a visit from a chaplain who possesses their confidence and, with that, the means of consoling them, of upholding their moral strength, and every time the prisoners express the wish, of hearing their confessions?

Accept, sir, the expression of my sincere esteem.

(Signed) D. J. CARDINAL MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

Von Bissing Cornered by Cardinal
Governor General of Belgium, Brussels, May 19th, 1915.

To His Eminence Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines.

I am in receipt of your Eminence's letter of the 14th instant.

Relative to the decisions which on two different occasions I have been led to take regarding the desires manifested by your Eminence concerning the religious interests of your diocese, you have risen up in wrath against me, employing offensive expressions in my regard and accusations which I resent as unjustified. It has thus been impossible for me to offer any definite defense. I shall at last find myself com-

elled to refuse to have for the future written or unwritten relations with your Eminence or to take into consideration requests possibly justifiable unless your Eminence employs toward me in the language used the courtesy which I have the right to exact.

Up to the present I have forced myself, in ample measure, to make allowance in religious matters, as in others, for the situation created by the particular circumstances in which we find ourselves. But I must protest against the way in which your Eminence finds pretext to enter into conflict with me in my character of representative of his Majesty the Emperor, my supreme chief.

I offer to your Eminence the assurance of my sincere esteem, and I have the honor to be your devoted servant.

(Signed) BARON VON BISSING,
Major General.

Resents "Discourtesy" Charge

Archbishop's House, Malines, May 29th, 1915.

To His Excellency Baron von Bissing, Governor General, Brussels.

Sir—The letter No. 2722, dated May 19th, with which your Excellency has honored me, has come duly to hand and I wish to acknowledge it.

In order to conform with your Excellency's desire, I shall refrain from treating directly with you the question of the performance of their religious duties by Belgian prisoners in Germany or by those confined in the prison of St. Giles.

But truth compels me to point out that in my preceding correspondence I have never been impelled in my solicitude by any other feeling than the moral and religious interests of my countrymen. For these interests I am responsible. I am aware that I have shown a certain amount of vehemence in supporting the cause I had to defend. I beg your Excellency to recognize in my language only the expression of deep convictions. In the course of my career, already long, I have been engaged in numerous discussions, sometimes with friends, at other times with adversaries; I never remember having been charged with want of courtesy toward the people with whom I have been in controversy. The fact that my thoughts are centered on truth as it stands might sometimes suggest the idea that my judgment of facts aims at persons and their intentions; but may I say that that is a result for which in justice I alone cannot be held responsible?

Your Excellency is kind enough to end your letter by declaring your good-will to take a generous view of our religious warfare. This emboldens me to bring two facts to your notice. It is for you to consider them and to judge whether they call for your intervention. I think it my duty to make them known to you.

The Baron von Baudenhausen, military commander at Antwerp, in a letter addressed to the dean of Antwerp, makes certain complaints against the clergy of which one is quoted in these terms: "Auch ein Fall der Verweigerung der Absolution, weil das Beichtkind sich nicht verpflichtete, seine deutsche Dienstherrschaft zu verlassen, ist gemeldet."

What goes on in the secrecy of the confessional box is free from all exterior jurisdiction, whether civil, military, or even religious.

On Monday, May 24th, in Whitsun Week—at 10 a. m.—in accordance with an old standing tradition, a procession took place at Malines. The procession had been authorized by the Kreischef of Malines, M. Jochnus. At the moment when this procession of devout faithful, which was in every sense of a religious nature and was presided over by his Lordship Mr. Legraive, auxiliary bishop of the diocese, was making its way round the Grand Place, a German military band broke through the procession and created a great din as they passed by the side of the bishop, who was carrying the Blessed Sacrament.

Happily, the clergy and the crowd were able to restrain their indignation. Nevertheless, their innermost feelings were deeply pained.

Please accept, sir, the assurance of my sincere esteem.

(Signed) D. J. CARDINAL MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

*Note—"Another case is reported of a denial of absolution, because the penitent refused to leave his service in the German army."

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

Copyright, 1919, by Public Ledger Co.
Copyright, Canadian, 1919, by Public Ledger Co.
International Copyright, 1919, by Public Ledger Co.

Cardinal Mercier's Story

Including his correspondence with the German authorities in Belgium during the war, 1914 to 1918, edited by Professor Fernand Mayence of Louvain University and translated by the Benedictine Monks of St. Augustine's, Ramsgate, England.

CHAPTER XIV

The Cardinal Asks Von Bissing to Authorize the Sending of Chaplains to the Belgian Army and Presses for Religious Ministers to Political Prisoners to Be Entrusted to Belgian Priests. The Governor General Refuses

Archbishop's House, Malines, April 18th, 1915.

To His Excellency Baron von Bissing, Governor General, Brussels.

Sir—I take the opportunity which your Excellency offers me to explain to you a situation in religious matters which gives me great anxiety.

I know that your Excellency has taken steps with headquarters in Berlin, unfortunately without success, to obtain for Belgian priests, or at least Hollanders, an authorization to go and exercise their ministry among our countrymen interned in Germany. It only remains for us to await patiently the result of this request, which is made solely from a sense of religious feeling and which ought, one would think, appear to all as quite disinterested.

What at present worries me is the organization of the chaplaincies in the Belgian army.

Since the beginning of the war, several chaplains have died or have been brought to the hospitals wounded; others have been recalled to Belgium by us because they were wanted by their parishes or for teaching. The need of their being replaced in the army is urgent.

Will your Excellency allow me to propose to you the names of four priests to whom you might grant a passport? I should be pleased to add to them the name of a priest who is asked for by the refugee Belgians at Uden in Holland.

Again, it is exclusively the interests of religion which are at stake here; and I forward my request with all candor and confidence to the General Government.

Accept, sir, the renewed expression of my sincere esteem.

(Signed) D. J. CARDINAL MERCIER,
Archbishop of Malines.

Governor General of Belgium, Brussels, April 22d, 1915.

To His Eminence Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines.

On the 18th of this month your Eminence asked me to grant a passport to five Belgian ecclesiastics in order to allow them to go and exercise their priestly ministry in the Belgian army and among a number of refugees.

I regret to be unable to comply with your Eminence's request. Among other reasons which dictate my decision is the consideration that in the occupied part of Belgium the need of priests begins to make itself felt, and I feel I can attach all the more weight to this circumstance, inasmuch as the Belgian army can have recourse to French priests.

I offer your Eminence the expression of my sincere esteem and I have the honor to be your very devoted servant.

(Signed) BARON VON BISSING,
Major General.

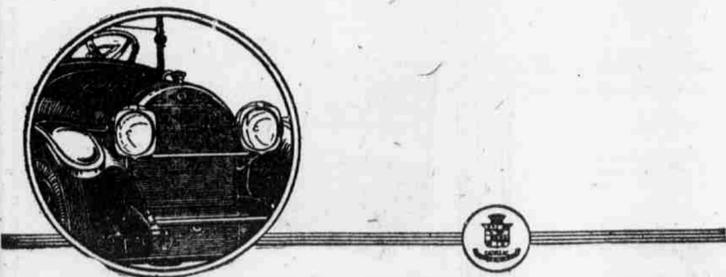
Spiritual Help for Countrymen
Archbishop's House, Malines, April 24th, 1915.

To His Excellency Baron von Bissing, Governor General, Brussels.

Sir—The motives which could even for an instant restrain your Excellency from granting the request I made of you with confidence for a passport for priests destined to rejoin the Belgian army and our refugees at Uden, will quite naturally come to the mind of any one who is not acquainted with the special conditions attached to the administration of spiritual help to our countrymen.

It is quite true, your Excellency, that there is a dearth of priests in Belgium also. In all the colleges staffs are reduced to a third; a number of parishes are without one or several curates. But it is true, on the other hand, that in Belgium the population of the parishes and the pupils in schools are reduced in number; it is also true that industries, for instance economic and social industries, have greatly slackened their activities.

On the other hand, in the army the presence of a priest in each battalion is indispensable and this is an immediate and every-day necessity. Moreover, it is out of the question to appeal to the co-operation of the French clergy, for the regiments of the Belgian army being all bilingual, it is absolutely needful that



WE KNOW, as everybody else knows, of course, the Cadillac is an economical car to operate. But some owners report to us such low figures of upkeep expense, that, frankly, we feel as though we should make some allowance for their enthusiasm.

NEEL-CADILLAC COMPANY
142 North Broad Street

Neckties, Gloves, Evening Vests, Canes for "Him"!

- SHIRTS**
Printed Madras, Percale—\$2.00.
Madras—\$1.50, \$3, \$3.50.
Genuine Fongee, Collars to Match—\$5.
Double-Weight Tub Silk—\$2.50.
Heavy Broadcloths—\$8.50, \$10, \$12.
Crepe—\$2, \$10, \$12.
Jackets—\$10, \$12, \$13.50.
White Oxford, Collars Attached—\$2.50.
Full-Dress Shirts, Plain and Pleated Bosoms—\$2.50, \$3.50, \$4, \$5.
HOSIERY
Cotton, Plain Colors, "Phoenix"—50c, 55c.
- Silk—\$30, \$1, \$1.50.
Lisle Thread—\$1.
Imported French Lisle and Silk—\$4, \$5.
Wool Half Hose—\$1, \$1.50, \$2.
Golf Hose—\$1, \$1.50, \$2, \$2.50, \$3, \$5.
- NECKWEAR**
Plain and Fancy Cut Silks—\$1, \$1.50, \$2, \$2.50, \$3, \$3.50, \$7.50.
Knitted Scarfs, Plain Colors—\$1, \$1.50, \$2, \$2.50, \$3, \$4.
Full-Dress Ties, Black and White—50c, 75c, \$1, \$1.50.
- GLOVES**
Tan, Black, White, Gray, Mastic, Washable Cane—\$2.50, \$3, \$4, \$4.50, \$5, \$5.50.
Genuine Mocha—\$4.
Genuine Buck—\$4.
Lined Gloves for Street or Motor Wear, Lined With Silk or Fur—\$4.50, \$5, \$6, \$7, \$10, \$14.
Wool-Lined Mittens, in Tan and Black—\$1, \$1.50, \$2.
Evening Dress Gloves—\$2, \$2.50.
- CANES**
Plain and Silver Mounted; Varied Assortment of Hardwoods—\$2.50 to \$15.
- UMBRELLAS**
Gloria Union Taffetas & Pure Silks—\$2.50, \$3, \$3.50, \$5, \$6, \$7, \$8, \$10, \$15, \$20, \$25, \$30, \$35, \$40, \$45, \$50, \$55, \$60, \$65, \$70, \$75, \$80, \$85, \$90, \$95, \$100, \$110, \$120, \$130, \$140, \$150, \$160, \$170, \$180, \$190, \$200.
- CANE UMBRELLAS**
Bare Silk—\$15.
HATS
Soft Felt Hats: New Shades Brown, Green, Taupe, Smoke, Havana—\$7, \$8, \$10.
Genuine Velour—\$12, \$14, \$16.
Silk Hats—\$12.
Caps: New English Caps; Checks, Tweeds, Plain—\$2, \$2.50, \$3, \$3.50, \$4, \$5.
New English Derbies—\$5, \$7, \$8.
- SMOKING JACKETS**
Plain Backs; Fancy Silk—\$10, \$12, \$13.50, \$15, \$18, \$20, \$25, \$30, \$35.
Toupe Nutria—\$30.
- BATHROBES**
Made of Terry Cloth—\$5, \$7.50, \$10, \$12, \$14.
- LOUNGING ROBES**
\$8.50, \$10, \$12, \$15, \$20, \$25, \$30, \$35.
Leather Belts—75c, \$1, \$1.50, \$2.
Sterling Silver Buckles—\$1, \$2, \$3.50, \$5, \$8.
- Belt Straps for Silver Buckles; Black, Tan, White, Cordovan—\$1, \$1.50, \$2.
- DETACHABLE FUR COLLARS**—Can be worn on any coat:
XXX Heaver, Best Quality—\$75.
XXX Heaver, Best Quality—\$60.
Hudson Seal—\$20, \$25, \$35.
Natural Nutria—\$25.
Toupe Nutria—\$30.
- MUFFLERS**
Silk and Wool for Street and Full Dress Wear:
Wool—\$2.50, \$3, \$5, \$8, \$9.
Silk—\$4, \$5, \$6, \$7.50, \$8, \$10, \$12, \$15.
- HANDKERCHIEFS**
White Initial Handkerchiefs—50c, \$1.
White Linen—50c, 75c, \$1, \$1.50.
Fancy Cotton—50c, \$1.
Fancy Linen—\$1.50, \$2, \$2.50.
Traveling Bags—\$7.50, \$12, \$24, \$30.
Suit Cases—\$10, \$20, \$30.
- PAJAMAS**
Cotton, in Plain Colors—\$2.50, \$3.
Genuine Solsette—\$5.
Flannel Pajamas—\$2.50, \$4.
Silk and Cotton—\$7.50, \$8, \$10.
Fine Silk—\$15.
- NIGHTSHIRTS**
\$2, \$2.50, \$3.
- FULL-DRESS WAISTCOATS**
In Black or White, in Figue, Linen, Silk—\$4.50, \$5, \$6, \$6.50, \$7.50, \$8.50, \$10, \$12, \$13.50.

William H. Wanamaker
1217-19 Chestnut St.



Fruit Juices Protect Teeth

Mennen Cream Dentifrice has a mild fruit content. Fruit acid protects teeth by increasing the flow of saliva. Saliva is Nature's perfect mouth wash. It destroys the poisons of decayed food particles. An ample flow of saliva prevents teeth trouble.

The fruit acid in Mennen's stimulates the salivary glands—makes your mouth water—thus aiding Nature. Some dentifrices are strongly alkaline and partially paralyze the salivary glands. Such dentifrices are dangerous.

Mennen Cream Dentifrice cleans the teeth scientifically—breaks down tartar formations, and removes tobacco stains. A 20% content of alcohol conditions the gums and exerts an antiseptic action.

Mennen's is pleasant to use—highly efficient, leaves a refreshing after-taste. It is so concentrated that a 35 cent tube lasts a long time. Try it.

THE MENNEN COMPANY
NEWARK, N.J. U.S.A.