# "TOO MUCH POLITICS IN SERMONS," GERMANS CR

"Priests Gave Vent to Strong Feelings," Says Von Bissing. "Your Complaints Not Definite," Replies Cardinal Mercier-Upholds Stand of the Clergy

## Explanatory Comment

There are protests as usual in the appended letters of Von Bissing, but there is also a note of deference which is significant.

For the second time the Governor General emphasizes the waiver of his claim to exact loyalty pledges from the clergy and leaves the survey of their conduct to Cardinal Mercier, whose sympathy with patriotic utter-

ances, heartening to drooping spirits, characterized his whole course throughout the war. One does not have to look far to understand Von Bissing's concessions. The primate was planning a visit to Rome, and it was a foregone conclusion that, at least so far as matters of religious jurisdiction were concerned, he would speak frankly. Moreover, when the Governor General entrusted the Cardinal with supervision of the priests, as regards their sermons, and relied upon him to prevent alleged dangerous incursions into politics,

Von Bissing was conciliatory toward a dominant figure, of whom he, perhaps, soon hoped to be rid. But the Cardinal was not only a priest but a statesman of unceasing watchfulness. His immediate detec-Mon of what seems to have been a plot to prevent his re-entry into Belgium compelled the government to grant him a passport which should specifically accord him the right to return as well as to depart. His rejection of the

first document put forward the date of his journey from November to January. In the meantime, Von Bissing was maneuvered into such concessions that the Cardinal was enabled to write with unconcealed exultation his thanks for seeing himself "Intrusted with the control of priests suspected of having lacked in respect for the dignity of their ministry."

Unquestionably at this point Von Bissing realized, however reluctantly, that it was impossible to prevent the Cardinal from having his way on certain vital subjects.

# 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 XIX

Sermons Preached by the Clergy

TN HIS interview with the Cardinal concerning the pastoral "An Appeal to Prayer," Baron von der Lancken had already complained in the Governor General's name of the abuse which, according to him, priests made of the liberty of speech granted them. The Cardinal having asked for precise details, the Baron answered that he did not wish to bring about a discussion on this subject, as he had not brought with him the documents in possession of the General Government incriminating n number of priests.

Time and again Von Bissing returned to this subject. Setting aside the generalities to which he had confined himself hitherto, he accused by name certain priests of giving vent in their sermons to strong feelings of a political character:

Governor General's Office, Brussels, November 6th, 1915.

To His Eminence Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines.\*

In consequence of verbal representations made

waived my claim to exact from each member of the clergy a declaration of levalty, confiding as I did in the pledge given by your Eminence and on your guaranteeing the peaceful attitude of the clergy.

I offer to your Eminence the expression of my sincere esteem and have the honor to be your devoted servant. (Signed) BARON VON BISSING.

Major General His Eminence replied to the Governor General's

Government General of Belgium, Brussels, November 10th, 1915. To His Eminence Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of

remonstrances in his letter of November 27th.

Your Eminence will not be surprised if I raise a iolent protest against the sermon which the Rev. Cardyn preached at Brussels in St. Gudule on the occasion of the service for Belgian soldiers killed in the war. In the Flemish text especially, this sermon shows an abuse of the liberty granted to the ministers

As your Eminence assisted at this service, I can dispense myself from giving precise details about the matter of this sermon; but I must nevertheless express my surprise that such language was used in your presence. I venture to hope that the preacher Cardyn will have to give an account of his action to the ecclesiastical authorities and that a guarantee will be given me that such an abuse will not be repeated.

I present to your Eminence the expression of my cincere esteem and have the honor to be your devoted

(Signed)

BARON VON BISSING, Major General Archbishop's House, Malines, November 12th, 1915.

Archbishop of Malines.

To His Excellency Baron von Bissing, Governor General of Belgium.

Sir-Your Excellency's dispatch, dated November 10th, No. 9529, was delivered to me yesterday and I hasten to send you an acknowledgment of it. It is no longer possible for me to send for the

Abbe Cardyn at the Archbishop's House before I leave for Rome,\* but I will ask my administrator to act as an interpreter of my wishes in this regard, and on my return to Belgium I shall deem it my duty to give him detailed instructions. Accept, your Excellency, the expression of my

sincere esteem. D. J. CARDINAL MERCIER, (Signed)

Archbishop's House, Malines, November 27th, 1915. To His Excellency Baron von Bissing, Governor Gen-

eral, Brussels Sir-I have just this moment received your Ex-

\*Note-The Cardinal meant to go a few days later \*Note—The Cardinal meant to go a few days later to Rome whither he had just been called by His Holiness, Pope Benedict XV. But when he discovered that the passport given him by the German authorities said nothing about his return, he put off his journey and before answering the call of the Holy Father he desired to secure guaranties that would allow him to return to Belgium with as much ease as he had been allowed to leave it. He did not start for Rome till January 12, 1916.

PLATINUM AND

DIAMONDS

FLEXIBLE BRACELETS BAR P:NS BROOCHES

WRIST WATCHES

LORGNONS LORGNON CHAINS

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SEMI-PRECIOUS STONES

DORINE POWDER BOXES

PENDANTS

CUFF LINKS

HAT PINS

VEIL PINS BRACELETS

BROOCHES THIMBLES

PENCILS

STUDS CUFF LINKS PEN KNIVES

RINGS CARD CASES

CIGARETTE CASES MATCH BOXES

CIGAR CUTTERS

TIE CLASPS WATCH CHAINS

LINGERIE PINS

LA VALLIERES BEAD NECKLACES MESH BAGS and I hasten to answer it.\*

I have made inquiries about the sermon preached at the Lourdes Grotto at Jette St. Pierre on October 14th. The preacher inveighed against the frivolous spirit which draws to the cinema and worldly pleasures young men whose right place was elsewhere, viz., at the service of their country. He did, in fact, at this part of his sermon give some statistics. He said that at the time of the enrollment of volunteers in our army 12 per cent of the young men of Brussels had enlisted, while there were 80 per cent who came from the country. The very precision of the figures shows that the orator had in view the enrollment of young men before the German occupation, for on what source would he have relied for giving figures of recruiting at the present time?

I will look into the case of the Rev. Mr. Swalus, although the accusation brought against him by your Excellency is exceedingly vague; also the case of the Rev. Wittemberg.

But I am now in a position to assert that the Vicaire Mussche did not preach in the church in the Chaussee de Waterloo on October 24th and that there is no such priest as Carpentier attached to that

Accept, dear Governor General, the assurance of my sincere esteem.

(Signed) D. J. CARDINAL MERCIER,

Archbishop of Malines.

Archbishop's House, Malines, December 3rd, 1915.

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

Sir-I am now in a position to complete the information I had the honor of addressing your Excellency on November 27th in answer to your letter No. 9742, dated November 24th.

In that letter your Excellency mentioned the sermons preached on October 14th by the Rev. Swalus at Lacken (Jette St. Pierre), and by the Rev. Cardyn at Ste. Gudule on November 8th. You there censured the sermons preached October 31st by the Cure Swalus at Lacken and October 24th by the Revs. Carpentier and Mussche in the Church of Stc. Alice at Schaerbeek.

The explanations I had the honor to give your Excellency in my letter of November 27th regarding the sermon of October 24th ought to have satisfied your Excellency; this same letter put the case of the Revs. Carpentier and Mussche out of question, as they did not preach on October 24th.

There remain the cases of the Rev. Swalus (October 31st), the Rev. Cardyn (November 8th) and the Rev. Wittemberg.

The Cure Swalus, whom I questioned yesterday at Brussels, tells me that he has been summoned several times to the Kommandantur during the last

\*Note—This dispatch has not been found. As can be gathered from the Cardinal's letter of December 3rd, the Governor General came back on the complaints which he had already stated in his dispatches of November 6th and 10th and brought up fresh accusations against the Reverends Swalus, Carpentier, Mussche and Wittemberg.

brought face to face with his accusers. He wished the grievances articled against him to be drawn up in detail, in order that he might give a straightforward explanation. He was answered that his accusers are no longer here. In reality, it was not he, but Pere Melot who preached on October 31st in the Church of the Chaussee de Waterloo. As a matter of fact, the Rev. Father's sermon had for its sole subject a theme which was as far removed as it could be from our earthly conflicts, viz., "The Beatific Vision." Not one word passed the lips of the Rev. Father which could give offense to the most susceptible of his hearers. As a guarantee of this statement I have several witnesses altogether worthy of belief, who were present at the sermon and were capable of thoroughly understanding it.

It is less easy to answer the scruptes of your Excellency about the preaching of the Revs. Cardyn and Wittemberg, because neither your dispatch of the 6th nor that of the 24th brings forward any definite complaint.

The dispatch of November 4 says that some Catholics, offended in their religious sentiments by a sermon of the Vicaire Wittemberg at Ste. Alice, left the church before the end of the sermon. I had an opportunity of seeing M. Wittemberg, but was unable to get at the bottom of the matter for want of anything definite which the German authorities think they can bring against him. If these Catholics hesitate, which I can understand, to tell a lay power what it was that troubled their conscience, would they be unwilling to come forward and confide it to their bishop?

They know that they have no reprisals to fear on our part and that we have no interest in abusing

As regards the sermon of November 8 at Stc. Gudule, I believe I can put my finger on what gave your Excellency cause for anxiety. A German of high standing said to a trustworthy person, who repeated it to me, that the Abbe Cardyn had compared Germany to a prostitute. As a matter of fact, this person was led into error by a spy who heard the word "prostitution," and applied it in a distorted sense. I heard the preacher myself. He denounced a few wretched wights who, instead of joining in the general mourning of the country, unmindful of their brothers, father or husband fighting for them, hand themselves over shamefully to the enemy.

I do not wish to end this letter without thanking your Excellency for being so good as to accede to my desire, expressed at sundry times, of seeing myself intrusted with the control of priests suspected of having lacked in respect for the dignity of their ministry.

Accept, dear Governor General, the expression of my sincere esteem.

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

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

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In her little red dress that was as unstudied in the hang of it as her personality was in its charm, this black-cred, black-haired, young person proved the more universel character of requiration feature the production of

quality of saliva.

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decrees.

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FEATURE AT WALNUT

"Little Shepherd of Kingdom
Come," by John R. Fox,
Produced

Dorothy Dunn was the delightful little bundle of emotions which gave life to the rather mechanical movement of incident in "The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come" last night at the Walnut.

In her little red drass that was as

an up-to-date music revue are some of the high lights of the "All Jazz Revue." In the cast are such stars as Lou Powers, Pat Daily, Pearl Hamilton and Naryin Castlin. Reward Offered for Arrest of Christ-Marrin Castlin. Margie Catlin.

recently by the head of the political department, I

take the liberty to point out to your Eminence that

priests continue, when preaching, to abuse the liberty

given them as ministers of worship. Among the nu-

merous cases which have been brought to my notice I

continually uttering political manifestoes. On Octo-

ber 14th one of them went so far as to touch openly

and directly on the recruiting of the Belgian army.

His words must have been understood by young Bel-

gians as an invitation to disobey my orders, about

the sense of which there could be no doubt. The

preacher gave it out as certain that 12 per cent only

of the Brussels people fit for military service had re-

joined the army, while 80 per cent of the province

had passed over the frontier and had enlisted. The

preacher knew what he was doing, for he knew of

young people who had been punished for violating my

nence, I think that the guilt of these priests deserves

selves encouraged by the formal or tacit consent of

their ecclesiastical superiors. Nevertheless, I shall be

forced to make the preacher of the Lacken sermon re-

proceedings in some other way. Consequently, I beg

your Eminence to let me know whether I may count

on some disciplinary measure being taken by ecclesi-

astical authority. I believe I have this right. I have

\*Note-The original of this letter has not been found. There only exists one translation of it in the archives of the Archbishop's house.

sponsible if a stop is not put to those inconsiderate

some extenuation from the fact that they feel them-

As I have declared several times to your Emi

At the Lourdes grotto, at Lacken, preachers are

will only put forward the following:

People's - "Hip! Hip! Hoorsy!" cheered up burlesque faus immensely with its pep in action and iazz in mel-ody. The 1920 edition is written strictly up to the new year. Favorite bur quers are in the cast.

Bijou—"Cabaret Girls" were seen in dances and specialties that were as varied and colorful as the most blase devotee of the "wheel" could ask for. The cast was of exceptional quality.

Old Favorite at the Orpheum Lettie Blair Parker's "Under South-n Skies" was presented at the Or-In her little red dress that was as unstudied in the hang of it as her personality was in its charm, this blackeyed, black-haired, young person preved by far the most natural character of the play. Dramatization from novels is quite generally, it seems, a polyglot of episodes which eventually rumble along to some sort of happy ending, and "The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come" is no exception. And yet it was pleasant rambling withal.

George Simpson's Chad was whole—

AT THE BURLESQUE HOUSES pleam. It is a story of the land of cotton and magnelia bloom, of chivalrous, impulsive men and lovely women of ante-to and magnelia bloom, of chivalrous, impulsive men and lovely women of ante-to and magnelia bloom, of chivalrous, impulsive men and lovely women of ante-to and magnelia bloom, of chivalrous, impulsive men and lovely women of ante-to and magnelia bloom, it is a story of the land of cotton and magnelia bloom, it

A book of which he is the author was the Christmas present distributed by the Rev. David M. Steele to 600 members of the Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany, of which he is rector.

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