

# 'BRUTAL,' MERCIER CALLS HERDING OF THE UNEMPLOYED BELGIANS

**'Clergy Demand a Place in the Vanguard of the Persecuted,' Cardinal Writes—'Record This Request With Pride,' He Tells Von Bissing in Additional Protest Against Deportations**

## Explanatory Comment

IN HIS defense of Belgian workmen doomed to slavery in the German Empire, Cardinal Mercier was spokesman for thousands of patriots whose spiritual armor was as strong as their material weapons were weak. Lemonier, the burgomaster of Brussels, successor to the indomitable Max, who early in the war had been imprisoned in Germany, refused to deliver to the invaders the lists of the unemployed, and this remarkable handbill appeared one morning on the boardings of the capital:

### WE WILL NOT GO!

The people of Brussels understand. They do not obey the demands of the Germans. They are not going to allow themselves to be led as sheep to the slaughter. In a great number of communes many men have not presented themselves; they have not been disturbed. Those who have surrendered themselves have been led away.

Shame on those who present themselves because of selfishness or because they have a certificate of compliance or because they are certain of being placed at liberty.

All for each one! Each one for all!  
A Belgian who works for Germany fights against his Fatherland.  
Let them organize their man-hunt, we will hide ourselves.  
Long live the Fatherland! Long live the King!  
We will not go!

That many eventually did go is proof of the magnitude and madness of the German oppression. In Brussels, however, the deportations were fewer than in certain of the smaller exclusively industrial centers. Besides, even if exhibited by the helpless, was always an embarrassment to the Prussian system.

## 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.

[Continuation of Chapter XXX—The Deportation of the Unemployed.]

A fresh letter to Baron von Bissing, the Cardinal maintains that his arguments have been left unanswered; he protests once more against the brutal way in which the recruiting of the so-called unemployed everywhere takes place.

Archbishop's House, Malines, November 29, 1916.

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

The letter which your Excellency does me the honor to write me, dated November 23, is disappointing. In several circles that I had reason to believe well-informed it was asserted that your Excellency had felt it your duty to lay a protest before the highest authorities of the empire against the regulations you were forced to apply to Belgium. I counted, therefore, on at least some delay in the application of these measures, pending a fresh examination and in a mitigation in the method of executing them.

But to and behold! without a word of answer to any one of the arguments by which I proved in my letters of October 19 and November 10 the illegal and anti-social nature of the condemnation of the Belgian workmen to forced labor and deportation, your Excellency confines yourself to repeating in your letter of November 23 the very text of your letter of October 28. These two letters are, in fact, identical both in matter and form.

On the other hand the recruiting of the so-called unemployed is carried out most of the time without any regard to the observations of the local authorities. Many reports I hold in my hands bear witness that the clergy are brutally kept at a distance, the mayors and local councilors silenced; the recruiting officers find themselves in the presence of individuals unknown to them and arbitrarily make their choice from among their number. Instances of this abound. I will give you two recent examples from a crowd of others which I hold at your Excellency's service.

On November 21 the recruiting of forced labor took place in the village of Kersbeek-Miscom. Of the 1325 inhabitants of the commune, the recruiting officers took away ninety-four in a body without distinction of social status or profession; farmers' sons, men who have to support aged and infirm parents, fathers of families who left wife and children in want; men who were as useful to their families as their daily bread. Two families, both of them, saw four sons carried off at the same time. Of the ninety-four thus deported, only two were really unemployed.

In the region of Aerschot the recruiting took place on November 23. At Rillaer, Gelrode and Rotstaler young men who supported their widowed mothers, farmers, the heads of numerous families—one of them more than fifty years of age with ten children—cultivating the land and owning several head of cattle, who had never received a penny from public charity, were taken away by force in spite of all their protests. In the little village of Rillaer, as many as twenty-five young lads of seventeen were taken away.

Your Excellency would have wished that the communal authorities be accomplices in these odious recruitings; neither their legal position nor their conscience would allow them to do so. But they could have enlightened the "recruiters" and are especially qualified for that. Priests, who know the common people better than any one else, could render these officials valuable help. Why is their assistance refused?

At the end of your letter your Excellency reminds me that professional men are not molested. If only the unemployed were taken away I could understand this exception. But if the able-bodied are enrolled indiscriminately that exception is unfair. It would be heinous to throw the whole burden of deportation on the working classes. The middle classes ought also to share in the sacrifice imposed on the nation by the occupying power, however cruel this sacrifice may be, and justly so, because it is cruel. Numbers of my clergy have entreated me to demand for them a place in the vanguard of the persecuted. I record this request and submit it to you with pride.

I still wish to believe that the authorities of the empire have not said their last word, that they will not be unmindful of our undeserved sorrows, of the repatriation of the civilized world, of the verdict of history and of the chastisement of God.

Accept, Excellency, the expression of my sincere esteem.

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

The Governor General commissioned the chief of the political department to acknowledge receipt of the Cardinal's letter of November 29, reserving the right of answering it himself later on.

Political Department of the Government General of Belgium, Brussels, December 5, 1916.

To His Eminence Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines.

I have the honor to inform your Eminence that the Governor General has noted with interest the remarks you made in your letter of the 29th inst., nevertheless, in consequence of a brief absence, he will be unable to reply for some days. To my great regret the pardon of F. Franch, of Malines, cannot be granted for the present. But when he has served half his sentence, if your Eminence wishes to present a request in his behalf, I have reason to hope that it will be granted with success. I present to your Eminence

## Cable Briefs

Latest reports from Ukraine are to the effect that Denikine's forces have been cut in two by the Ukrainian armies on the edge of the sea of Azof. One portion is scurrying to safety in the Caucasus mountains, and the other is trying to reach the eastern shores of the Black sea. This, it is said, has been accomplished by the minute men

called up by President Petura, and the Ukrainians now have 300,000 men under arms.

German Socialists have now taken up the cudgels against the trial of former Kaiser Wilhelm. It is argued that to surrender him to the Allies for trial would be to make him a martyr and thus play into the hands of the reactionaries.

Revision of the treaty of Versailles is under consideration by the Allies, ac-

ording to a high authority in London. The Entente governments realize, it is said, that Germany cannot recuperate if the economic terms of the treaty remain unchanged, and a policy of far-reaching revision has been determined on, dependent on Germany's good behavior.

Paris view is that the league of nations without the United States will be a puny infant. The league will be born next Friday, when the executive council will hold its first meeting; but un-

der present circumstances it will be a less important body than the reparations commission or the interallied mission, headed by Marshal Foch.

Mme. Landru has confessed that she impersonated two of "Bluebeard's" victims in order to permit him to get their savings. She gives as her excuse that she "loved her husband too well."

The anti-Socialist Bloc National, which swept France in the elections of November 16 last, won again in the

senatorial elections Sunday. As a result the Moderates will control two-thirds of the new Senate.

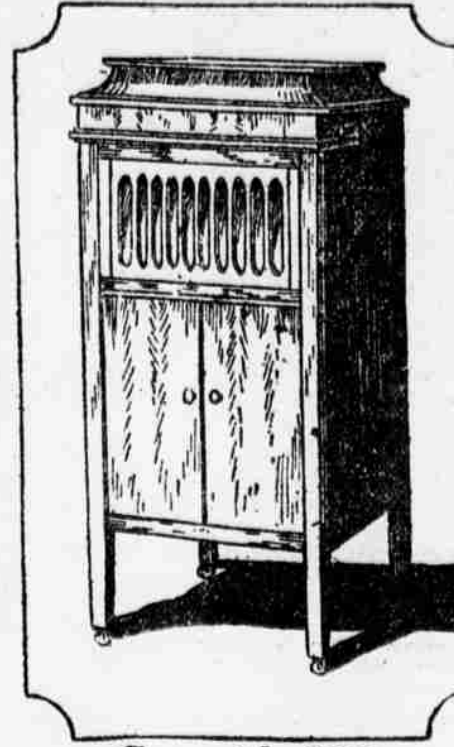
Charles Colborn, writer of "The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo," recently went broke at Monte Carlo himself. He was a member of a film company producing an illustration of his famous song, and the London banker of the company failed to send cash to pay hotel bills, so Colborn was held by the hotel as hostage. He is now suing the financier for damages.

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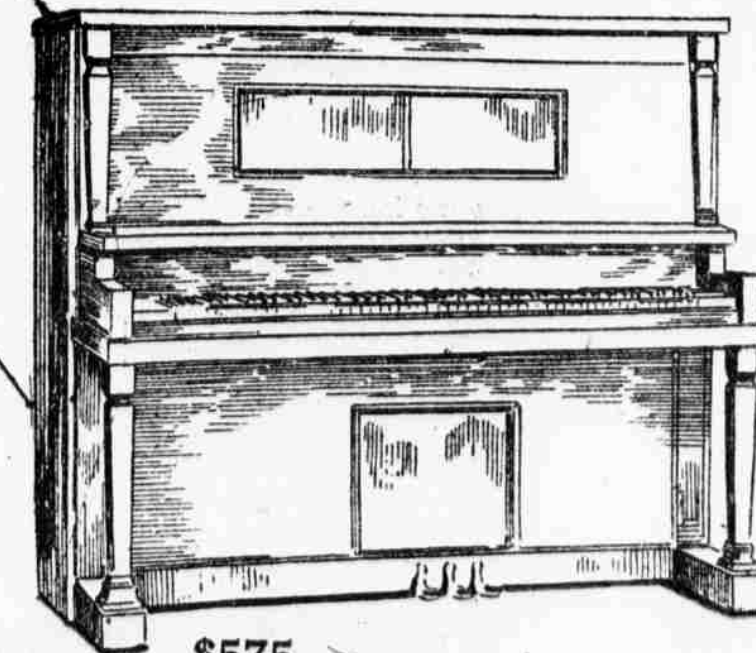
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