

# "COURAGE DOES NOT FLAG, WE ABIDE OUR TIME," SAYS MERCIER

"Victory, Reparation and Necessary Guarantees Are What We Count on," Declares Cardinal in Defending Pastoral and Attacking Deportations of Belgian Workmen

## Explanatory Comment

THE following are further extracts from the Cardinal's pastoral, "Courage, My Brethren," which rekindled the ire of Von Bissing against the prime:

"Those who fight for liberty under the Belgian flag are brave. The interned of Holland and England, who raise toward God, for their native land, their arms weighted with chains, are brave. Our exiled companions, who bear in silence the weight of their isolation, serve, they also, as best they can, the Belgian fatherland, as all those souls serve who, perhaps behind the walls of cloisters, perhaps gathered together by the home fireside, pray, suffer, wait for the return of the absent and of our common deliverance.

"We have heard the puissant voice of wives and mothers; through their sobs they besought God to sustain them with courage and faith for the honor of their husbands and their sons, driven by force into the factories of the enemy. We have understood how these valiant ones summoned their strength at the hour of farewell to give heart to their comrades or to thunder forth in a supreme effort the national hymn; we have seen them on their return, pale, wrecked, human ruins; while our eyes, wet with tears, sought their ashen glances, we bowed reverently before them because they revealed to us, beyond doubt, a new aspect hitherto unattained of the national heroism.

"In our youth our professors of history taught us rightly to admire Leonidas and his 300 Spartans who, rather than secure their safety in easy flight, chose to be crushed in the pass of Thermopylae by the Persian army. They fired us with enthusiasm for the 600 heroes of the land of Franchimont who, their liberty and their life being pledged, and having crossed in the night through the armies of Louis XI and Charles the Bold, succumbed in an assault of almost mad audacity and in a desperate resistance. The teachers of the Belgian generation of the future will have to cite traits differently evocative of military heroism and of patriotism."

## 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.

BARON VON DER LANCKEN, having in the course of an interview with Mgr. Lagraive, complained of the pastoral, "Courage, My Brethren," the Cardinal wrote him as follows:

Archbishop's House, Malines, Louvain, March 6, 1917.

To Baron von der Lancken, Chief of the Political Department, Government General, Brussels.

Dear Baron—You were so kind as to inform me through his Lordship, Mgr. Lagraive, that, thanks to your pressing instances, Mlle. Douterlingue will escape capital punishment. I rejoice with the family and thank you for your kind and effective intervention.

In the course of your interview with my auxiliary bishop it appears that you passed severe judgment on my last pastoral and expressed annoyance at a letter addressed by me to a club of young Frenchmen. On this last point you have been led astray, for I have not written, either to any young men's club or to any French newspaper.

As regards my pastoral, you must be acquainted by this time with the correspondence on this topic exchanged between the Governor General and myself. I cannot expect you to tell me that you are satisfied with my answer, but you cannot deny that in forming a judgment about the meaning or expediency of my pastoral, we must look at it from two points of view—that of the occupier and that of the unfortunate people whose territory is occupied.

You must acknowledge that the military power of Germany could not have conceived anything more opposed to its longing for peace than the forcible and woeful deportations, which have aroused universal indignation.

Accept, dear Baron, the expression of my sincere esteem.

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

Baron von der Lancken could think of nothing better to justify the action of the occupying power than to appeal to wartime necessities:

Political Department of the Government General, Brussels, March 9, 1917.

To His Eminence Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines.

Your Eminence's esteemed letter, dated the 6th inst., has duly come to hand. I did, as you say, discuss with Mgr. Lagraive your last pastoral and your letter published by the Parisian press. As regards this last, I take the liberty to send your Eminence an extract from the *Vingtieme Siecle*. According to this, the letter was not addressed directly to the *Revue des Jeunes*, but to one of its staff of writers.

I only revert to the pastoral in order to pass a criticism on the remark made by your Eminence that we must distinguish between the occupying power and the occupied country. The occupied country will understand many things done by the occupying power, if it makes an attempt to appreciate the latter's point of view. It will then realize that the occupying power has to take account of the necessities of war imposed on it, and that it by no means acts in an arbitrary manner. The occupying power will, of course, look upon all criticism of its administration as unwarranted, if no account be taken of the circumstances.

I offer to your Eminence the expression of my sincere esteem.

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

Inclosed with this letter was the following extract from the *Vingtieme Siecle*, dated February 24, 1917: AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF CARDINAL MERCIER

Undaunted Loyalty of French and Belgians Under Hardships

The *Revue des Jeunes* will publish tomorrow the following letter which one of its correspondents has just received from Cardinal Mercier:

Archbishop's House, Malines, January 15, 1917.

Dear Sir—Mr. X—has furnished me with a tangible proof of your kindness toward myself and my suffering flock. I appreciate it greatly and I thank you for it. Indeed, Belgium is being sorely tried and the suffering of the populations of northern France are not less keen. But, thank God, our courage does not flag. Our people, I mean the lower classes, they who have to bear the brunt of privations, are wonderful for their steadfastness. This week I went through the byways and alleys of a little town—Lierre—which the invaders had already looted in August, 1914, and from which they had just kidnapped 1000 able-bodied men. I went from house to house to see the families of the deported. I had to dry many tears and to comfort many in sorrow. I have heard hard words about the tyrants who brutally smash up our homes, but I have not heard either a wife or a mother asking for peace at any price. We suffer, but we bide our time. Victory, reparation and necessary guarantees are what we count on. The Americans in charge of the feeding of the French populations report that your own people

are animated with the same generous sentiments. With you, this spectacle is less surprising, as a Frenchman is temperamentally and traditionally generous. Historically he is the embodiment of warlike valor and of chivalry, whereas with us, who have enjoyed a long spell of peace and possess a less sanguine temperament, the intense loyalty shown during the last two years amazes us and inspires us with a sentiment, perhaps childishly exaggerated, of self-admiration.

You will understand and excuse this feeling, at all events in the case of the bishop, the father of his flock, and if I make much of it, it is to explain the comfort you have given me by your kind thoughtfulness.

I pray God to reward you for it, to bless you and yours and the noble French nation, and I offer you, sir, the assurance of my sincere esteem.

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

## CHAPTER XXXVII

Condemnation of Mgr. Lagraive, Auxiliary Bishop of Malines, and of M. l'Abbe Allaer

ON THE finding of the court-martial at Antwerp, Mgr. Lagraive, bishop auxiliary of Malines, was condemned to nine months' imprisonment for showing hospitality to a young Frenchman on his way to the frontier, and Abbe Allaer to eight months as an accomplice. The Cardinal learned of these sentences on his way through Brussels, after a few days' absence. He discovered at the same time that Baron von der Lancken, through the Nuncio, had advised him to ask for Mgr. Lagraive's reprieve. Accordingly, he at once sent in an appeal to the Governor General of this tenor:

St. Louis's Institute, Brussels, March 17, 1917.

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

Sir—In returning this evening to Brussels after a few days' absence, I learn to my amazement that the court-martial sitting at Antwerp has just sentenced Mgr. Lagraive, my bishop auxiliary, to nine months' imprisonment.

I feel that your Excellency will mercifully quash this sentence, the more so because I happen to know that the act was inspired, as Mgr. Lagraive avers, by motives of charity. I hope also that the Abbe Allaer, spiritual adviser to the seminary, who has been sentenced to eight months' imprisonment, will experience similar leniency.

Accept, sir, the assurance of my sincere esteem.

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

The next day the Cardinal begged for permission to visit Mgr. Lagraive at Antwerp:

Archbishop's House, Malines, March 18, 1917.

To Baron von der Lancken, Chief of the Political Department of the Government General, Brussels. Dear Baron—I am very anxious to visit this afternoon his Lordship Mgr. Lagraive in prison. Would you kindly procure me the necessary authority to do so or warn the governor of the prison by telephone? I will arrange to be at Antwerp between 4 and 5.

Accept, sir, the expression of my sincere esteem.

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

A few moments after sending this letter the Cardinal learned that Mgr. Lagraive had already been sent to Germany. He expressed his surprise to Baron von der Lancken:

Archbishop's House, Malines, March 18, 1917.

To Baron von der Lancken, Chief of the Political Department of the Government General, Brussels. Dear Baron—Yesterday, on my arrival at Brussels, I learned that his Excellency the Nuncio was urging me, on your advice, to send in a petition for the reprieve of Mgr. Lagraive, my auxiliary bishop. And this morning I learn that yesterday Mgr. Lagraive had already arrived in Germany. I have tried in vain to account for the coincidence.

Accept, dear Baron, the assurance of my sincere esteem.

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

## Auxiliary Bishop Reprieved

Three days later Mgr. Lagraive, having received a reprieve, returned to his country after spending forty-eight hours in the camp at Siegburg. The Cardinal hastened to thank Baron von Bissing for his intervention.

Archbishop's House, Malines, March 21, 1917.

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

Sir—At this very moment Mgr. Lagraive returns to us from Germany. The reprieve granted him is the result of your prompt and powerful intervention. I am only doing my duty in expressing to you how grateful I feel and at the same time I offer to you the assurance of my sincere esteem.

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

The Cardinal also thanked Baron von der Lancken for the share he had had in releasing Mgr. Lagraive and asked him to use his influence to obtain the Governor General's clemency on behalf of Abbe Allaer.

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

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