

# NAVAL RESERVIST GROUPS!

THE GROUP OF THOSE THAT LEFT HERE ON THE "NIOBE".  
THE GROUP OF THOSE THAT LEFT HERE ON THE "FRANCONIA".

THE GROUP OF THOSE THAT LEFT HERE ON THE "CARTHAGINIAN".  
THE GROUP OF THOSE THAT LEFT HERE ON THE "MONGOLIAN".

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## Cardinal Mercier to His People.

The Suppressed Pastoral (in part)--From the London, England, Tablet.

My Very Dear Brethren,—I cannot tell you how instant and how present the thought of you has been to me throughout the months of suffering and of mourning which we have passed through. I had to leave you abruptly on the 20th of August in order to fulfil my last duty towards the beloved and venerated Pope whom we have lost, and in order to discharge an obligation of the conscience from which I could not dispense myself in the election of the successor of Pius X, the Pontiff who now directs the Church under the title, full of promise and of hope, of Benedict XV.

It was in Rome itself that I received the tidings—stroke after stroke—of the partial destruction of the Cathedral church of Louvain, next to the burning of the Library and of the scientific installations of our great city, and next of the wholesale shooting of citizens, and tortures inflicted upon women and children, and upon unarmed and undefended men. And while I was still under the shock of these calamities the telegraph brought us news of the bombardment of our beautiful metropolitan church, of the church of Notre Dame au dela la Dyle, of the episcopal palace, and of a great part of our dear city of Malines.

Many a parish has lost its pastor. There is sounding in my ears the sorrowful voice of an old man of whom I asked whether he had had Mass on Sunday in his beloved church. "It is two months," he said, "since we had a Church." The parish priest and the curate had been interned in a concentration camp.

Thousands of Belgian citizens have in like manner been deported to the prisons of Germany, to Münsterlaggen, to Celle, to Magdeburg. At Münsterlaggen alone three thousand one hundred and thirty prisoners were numbered. History will tell of the physical and moral torments of their long martyrdom. Hundreds of innocent men were shot. I possess no complete necrology; but I know that there were ninety-one shot at Aerschot, that there, under pain of death, their fellow citizens were compelled to dig their graves. In the Louvain group of communes 376 persons, men and women, old men and sucklings, rich and poor, in health and in sickness, were shot or burnt.

In my diocese alone I know that 13 priests or religious were put to death. One of these, the parish priest

of Gerode, suffered, I believe, a veritable martyrdom. I made a pilgrimage to his grave, and amid the little flock which so lately he had been feeding with the zeal of an apostle, there did I pray to him that from the height of Heaven he would guard his parish, his diocese, his country.

We can neither number our dead nor compute the measure of our ruins. And what would it be if we turned our sad steps towards Liege, Charleroi and elsewhere?

And there where lives were not taken, and there where the stones of buildings were not thrown down, what anguish unrevealed! Families hitherto living at ease, now in bitter want; all commerce at an end, all careers ruined; industry at a standstill; thousands upon thousands of working women, shop girls, humble servant girls without the means of earning their bread; and poor souls forlorn on the bed of sickness and fever, crying, "O Lord, how long, how long!"

PATRIOTISM IN ACTION.

Across the smoke of conflagration, across the stream of blood, have you not glimpses, do you not perceive signs of His love for us? Is there a patriot among us who does not know that Belgium has grown great? Nay, which of us would have the heart to cancel this last page of our national history? Which of us does not exult in the brightness of the glory of this shattered nation? When in her throes she brings forth heroes, our Mother Country gives her own energy to the blood of those sons of hers. Let us acknowledge that we needed a lesson in patriotism. There were Belgians, and many such, who wasted their time and their talents in futile quarrels of class with class, of race with race, of opinion with opinion. Yet when, on the 2nd of August, a mighty foreign Power, confident in its own strength and defiant of the faith of treaties, dared to threaten us in our independence, then did all Belgians, without difference of party, or of condition, or of origin, rise up as one man, close ranged about their own King and their own Government, and cried to the invader: "Thou shalt not go through!"

At once, instantly, we were conscious of our own patriotism. For deep within us all is something deeper than personal interests, than per-

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sonal kinships, than party feeling, and this is the need and the will to devote ourselves to that more general interest which Rome termed the public good, *Res publica*. And this profound will within us is Patriotism.

Our country is not a mere concourse of persons or of families inhabiting the same soil, having amongst themselves, more or less intimate, of business, of neighborhood, or of community of memories, happy or unhappy. Not so; it is an association of living souls subject to a social organization to be defended and safeguarded at all costs, even the cost of blood, under the leadership of those presiding over its fortunes. And it is because of this general spirit that the life of a country lives a common life in the present, through the past, through the aspirations, the hopes, the confidence in a life to come, which they share together. Patriotism, an internal principle of order and unity, an organic bond of the members of a nation, was placed by the finest thinkers of Greece and Rome at the head of the natural virtues. Aristotle, the prince of the philosophers of antiquity, held disinterested service of the city—that is, the State—to be the very ideal of human duty. And the religion of Christ makes of patriotism a positive law; there is no perfect Christian who is not a perfect patriot.

THE REWARD OF THE SLAIN.

I was asked lately by a Staff officer whether a soldier falling in a righteous cause—and our cause is such, to our confidence but our congratulation. Not all our heroes obtain military honors, but for all we expect the immortal crown of the elect. For this is the virtue of a single act of perfect charity; it cancels a whole lifetime of sins. It transforms a sinful man into a saint.

Assuredly a great and a Christian comfort is the thought that not only amongst our own men, but in any belligerent army whatsoever, all who in good faith submit to the discipline of their leaders in the service of a cause they believe to be righteous, are sharers in the eternal reward of the soldier's sacrifice. And how many may there not be among these young men of twenty who had their survival, might possibly not have had the resolution to live altogether well, and yet in the impulse of patriotism had the resolution to die so well!

ENDURANCE.

We may now say, my brethren, without unworthy pride, that our lit-

tle Belgium has taken a foremost place in the esteem of nations. I am aware that certain onlookers, notably in Italy and in Holland, have asked how it could be necessary to expose this country to so immense a loss of wealth and life, and whether a verbal manifesto against hostile aggression, or a single cannon-shot on the frontier, would not have served the purpose of protest. But assuredly all men of good feeling will be with us in our rejection of these paltry counsels. Mere utilitarianism is no sufficient rule of Christian citizenship.

On the 19th of April, 1839, a treaty was signed in London by King Leopold, in the name of Belgium, on the one part, and by the Emperor of Austria, the King of Prussia, and the Emperor of Russia, on the other; and its seventh article decreed that Belgium should form a separate and perpetually neutral State, and should be held to the observance of this neutrality in regard to all other States. The co-signatories promised, for themselves and their successors, upon their oath, to fulfil and to observe that treaty in every point and every article without contravention, or tolerance of contravention. Belgium was thus bound in honor to defend her own independence. She kept her word. The other Powers were bound to respect and to protect her neutrality. Germany violated her oath; England kept hers.

These are the facts.

The laws of conscience are sovereign laws. We should have acted unworthily had we evaded our obligation by a mere feint of resistance. And now we would not rescind our first resolution; we exult in it. Being called upon to write a most solemn page in the history of our country, we resolved that it should be also a sincere, also a glorious page. And as long as we are compelled to give proof of endurance, so long we shall endure.

True, then, my brethren, to all murmurs of complaint. Remember St. Paul's words to the Hebrews, and through them to all of Christ's flock, when, referring to the bloody sacrifice of our Lord upon the Cross he reminded them that they had not yet resisted unto blood. Not only to the Redeemer's example shall you look, but also to that of the thirty thousand, perhaps forty thousand, men who have already shed their life-blood for their country. In comparison with them, what have you endured who are deprived of the daily comforts of your lives, your newspapers, your means of travel, communication with your families? Let the patriotism of our Army, the heroism of our King, of our beloved Queen in her magnanimity, serve to stimulate us and support us. Let us bemoan ourselves no more. Let us deserve the coming deliverance. Let us hasten it by our virtue even more than by our prayers. Courage, brethren. Suffering passes away; the crown of life for the souls, the crown of glory for our nation, shall not pass.

**DUTY UNDER INVASION.**

I do not require of you to renounce any of your national desires. On the contrary, I hold it as part of the obligations of my episcopal office to instruct you as to your duty in face of the Power that has invaded our soil and now occupies the greater part of our country. The authority of that Power is no lawful authority. Therefore in the soul and conscience you owe it neither respect, nor attachment, nor obedience. The sole lawful authority in Belgium is that of our King, of our Government, of our elected representatives of the nation. This authority alone has a right to our affection, our submission.

Thus, the invaders' acts of public administration have in themselves no authority, but legitimate authority has tacitly ratified such of those acts as affect the general interests, and this ratification, and this only, gives them juridic value.

Occupied provinces are not conquered provinces. Belgium is no more a German province than Galicia is a Russian province. Nevertheless, the occupied portion of our country is in a position it is compelled to endure. The greater part of our towns, having surrendered to the enemy on conditions, are bound to observe those conditions. From the outset of military operations the civil authorities of the country urged upon all private persons the necessity of abstention from hostile acts against the enemy's army. That instruction remains in force. It is our army, and our army solely, in league with the valiant troops of our Allies, that has the honor and the duty of national defence. Let us entrust the army with our final deliverance. Towards the persons of those who

are holding dominion among us by military force, and who assuredly cannot be sensible of the chivalrous energy with which we have defended, and are still defending, our independence, let us conduct ourselves with all peaceful forbearance. Some among them have declared themselves willing to mitigate, as far as possible, the severity of our situation, and to help us to recover some minimum of regular civic life. Let us observe the rules they have laid upon us so long as those rules do not violate our personal liberty, nor our consciences as Christians, nor our duty to our country. Let us not take bravado for courage, nor tumult for bravery.

**A WORD TO THE PRIESTS.**

You especially, my dearest brethren in the priesthood, be you at once the best examples of Patriotism and the best supporters of public order. On the field of battle you have been magnificent. The King and the Army admire the intrepidity of our military chaplains in face of death, their charity at the work of the ambulance. Your Bishops are proud of you.

You have suffered greatly. You have endured much calumny. But be patient; history will do for justice. I to-day bear witness for you.

Wherever it has been possible I have questioned our people, our clergy, and particularly a certain number of priests who had been deported to a German prison, to which I gladly render homage, has set at liberty. Well, I affirm upon my honor, and I am prepared to assert upon faith of my oath, that until now I have met a single ecclesiastic, secular or regular, who had once incited civilians to bear arms against the enemy. All have loyally followed the instructions of their bishops, given in the early days of August, to the effect that they were to use their moral influence over the civil population, so that order might be preserved and military regulations observed.

Our distress has moved the other nations, England, Ireland, and Scotland, France, Holland, the United States, Canada, have vied with each other in generosity for our relief. It is a spectacle at once most mournful and most noble. Here again is a revelation of the Providential Wisdom which draws good from evil. In your name, my brethren, and in my own, I offer the Governments and the nations that have succored us the assurance of our admiration and our gratitude.

With a touching goodness our Holy Father Benedict XV, has been the first to incline his heart towards us. When, a few moments after his election, he deigned to take me in his arms, I was bold enough then to ask that the first Pontifical Benediction he spoke should be given to Belgium, already in deep distress through the war. He eagerly closed with my wish which I know would also be yours. To-day, with delicate kindness, His Holiness has taken the step to renounce the annual offering of Peter's Pence from Belgium. In a letter dated on the beautiful festival of the Immaculate Virgin, Dec. 8th, he assures us of the part he bears in our sufferings, he prays for us, calls down upon our Belgium the protection of Heaven, and exhorts us to hail in the dawn approaching advent of the Prince of Peace, the dawn of better days.

The present letter shall be read on the following dates—on the first day of the year and on the Sundays following the day on which it shall severally reach you.

Accept, my dearest brethren, my wishes and prayers for you, and for the happiness of your families, and receive, I pray you, my paternal benediction.

D. J. MERCIER,  
Archbishop of Malines.

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