

TEXT OF CARDINAL MERCIER'S LETTER

Famous Pastoral Which Led
To His Arrest

PRIMATE OF BELGIUM

London Tablet Prints Excerpts and
Comments on Pronouncement—
Result of German Act is Very
Wide Circulation of Letter

(The Catholic Record)
Our readers will have read the reports of the arrest of Cardinal Mercier; the denials of the German military authorities; the dignified but emphatic protest of the King of the Belgians to Pope Benedict against this gross outrage which he asseverated was a fact despite official denials.

The facts which appear to be substantiated beyond question are that the printer of the pastoral was fined 600 marks (\$120); that the pastoral was peremptorily suppressed; that a German officer with a guard of soldiers called on His Eminence with some ready-made form of retraction which the cardinal was requested to sign. On promising an answer after a reasonable time for consideration, the officer and soldiers acting on instructions from headquarters refused time to consider and took up their quarters in the cardinal's residence. Cardinal Mercier refused to retract.

He was "invited" not to leave his residence.

The dignified and fearlessly truthful pastoral letter of martyred Belgium's dauntless primate is one of the finest evidences of simple but unflinching devotion to duty during a war relieved by many deeds of glorious heroism as well as blackened, alas! by unspeakable brutality.

Thanks to the London Tablet we are able to place before our readers this week the full text of the famous and historic pastoral. Let no reader of the Record fail to study it.

Following are the Tablet's comments which we need not apologize for reproducing in full:

Cardinal Mercier, the dauntless primate of Belgium has been arrested by the German troops, and his glorious pastoral to his people has been suppressed. Happily, this affront to the Holy See—this gross outrage upon the spiritual freedom of the Catholic Church—is likely to defeat its own purpose and to prove at once futile and foolish.

The first and immediate result has

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to secure the instant publication of new editions of this great moral instruction in French, Flemish, English, and Spanish—in all the languages that count—and effective arrangements for their distribution throughout the world. This brutal attempt to gag the freedom of the Catholic pulpit, and to put a muzzle upon the mouth of the representative of the Belgian hierarchy, shall have only this result, that ten men will read the forbidden pastoral for every one who would have heard of it in ordinary circumstances. The German troops may threaten as they please, they may set sentries in the churches, they may imprison priests, and they may drag others from the sacristy and even from the confessional, but the cardinal's winged words are aloft on all the winds, and will pass to the ends of the earth.

The pastoral may be read in the churches of Belgium, perhaps only by stealth, but, thanks to the Germans, every private soldier now serving in the Belgian army will receive a separate copy for his own use.

And why should these violators of the

neutrality of Belgium be so frightened at the appearance of this eloquent but simple exposition of elementary Christian truths? Here and there come passages which may make the invaders wince, but they tell us nothing that is new. "Germany," exclaims the cardinal, "violated her oath; England kept hers. These are the facts." Quite so. The Germans may wince—but could they deny? Again, in ringing words the cardinal says to his sorely tried flock: "I hold it as part of the obligations of my episcopal office to instruct you to do 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 Germans know all that as well as we do, and so armed men must be set around Catholic pulpits to prevent and intercept this message from a bishop to his flock.

And one thinks the German authorities might well have been grateful to the cardinal for the extreme care and circumspection he observes when he is dealing with the wholesale atrocities committed by their troops in Belgium. He speaks only of what he knows and of what he has been able personally to verify. "Hundreds of innocent men were shot, I possess no complete necrology; but I know that there were ninety-one shot at Aerschot, and that there, under pain of death, their fellow citizens were compelled to dig their graves. In the Louvain group of communes one hundred and seventy six persons, men and women, old men and sucklings, rich and poor, in health and sickness, were shot or burnt. In my diocese alone, I know that thirteen priests or religious were put to death."

He will not speak of the massacre of priests which took place in the diocese he has not visited, but adds: "There were to my own actual knowledge more than thirty priests shot in the diocese of Namur, Tournai, Liege."

It is surely well that these things should be known, and therefore that the futile attempt to suppress Cardinal Mercier's words by force should have been made. One result is that the pastoral will be read aloud in every Catholic church in the diocese of Westminster. That the German authorities should have done their best to intercept correspondence between Cardinal Mercier and Cardinal Bourne at least shows an intelligent anticipation of what was likely to happen.

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COSY COTTAGES FOR TEMPERATE SOLDIERS

Mrs. Astor's Novel Bargain With
Scottish Regiments—They Take
the Pledge

London, Jan. 27.—Mrs. Waldorf Astor, who since the outbreak of the war has been living at Plymouth, recently made an agreement with the men of two Scotch regiments encamped there. She promised that if they would sign a pledge to adhere to the temperance rule of conduct which Lord Kitchener has been so consistently advocating, she would see that they all had cottages instead of tents to sleep in.

The men all thought this an excellent bargain. Mrs. Astor was as good as her word, and these two regiments now have warm, dry cottages, some of them rented, and some specially constructed.

If the present occupants are sent to the front, the men who take their places will have a similar opportunity.

Mrs. Astor each day visits every ward of the naval and military base hospitals at Plymouth. Her husband is on military duty with his regiment. The Astor home is on the famous Plymouth Hoe, where Drake played bowls while awaiting the Spanish Armada. Mr. Astor represents the district in parliament as a Conservative.

BETTER TREATMENT URGED

No fewer than 120 members of the Imperial Merchant Service Guild, either commanding or officiating British ships lying in German ports at the outbreak of the war, are now interned at the Kallbein Camp near Berlin. Information which has reached the Guild about the treatment of interned prisoners has been laid before the secretary of state for foreign affairs, and it has been urged that as German captains and officers are given special accommodation and consideration in the way of food and general treatment, the same thing ought to apply to British captains and officers interned in Germany.

The Guild have received an important communication from the under secretary of state stating that he is directed by

Sir Edward Grey to inform the guild that the conditions under which British prisoners in Germany are interned, that urgent representations have recently been made to the United States Ambassador with a view to the amelioration of the conditions under which British prisoners in Germany are interned.