

together offered in willing immolation? Not that the State is worth more, essentially, than the individual or the family, seeing that the good of the family and of the individual is the cause and reason of the organisation of the State. Not that our country is a Moloch on whose altar lives may lawfully be sacrificed. The rigidity of antique morals and the despotism of the Caesars suggested the false principle—and modern militarism tends to revive it—that the State is omnipotent, and that the discretionary power of the State is the rule of Right. Not so, replies Christian theology; Right is Peace—that is the interior order of a nation, founded upon Justice. And Justice itself is absolute only because it formulates the essential relation of man with God and of man with man. Moreover, war for the sake of war is a crime. War is justifiable only if it is the necessary means for securing peace. St. Augustine has said: 'Peace must not be a preparation for war; and war is not to be made except for the attainment of peace.' In the light of this teaching, which is repeated by St. Thomas Aquinas, Patriotism is seen in its religious character. Family interests, class interests, party interests, and the material good of the individual take their place, in the scale of values, below the ideal of Patriotism, for that ideal is Right, which is absolute. Furthermore, that ideal is the public recognition of Right in national matters, and of national honor. Now there is no Absolute except God. God alone, by His sanctity and His sovereignty, dominates all human interests and human wills. And to affirm the absolute necessity of the subordination of all things to Right, to Justice, and to Truth, is implicitly to affirm God.

When, therefore, humble soldiers whose heroism we praise answer us with characteristic simplicity, 'We only did our duty,' or 'We were bound in honor,' they express the religious character of their Patriotism. Which of us does not feel that Patriotism is a sacred thing, and that a violation of national dignity is in a manner a profanation and a sacrilege?

THE REWARD OF THE SOLDIER.

I was asked lately by a Staff officer whether a soldier falling in a righteous cause—and our cause is such, no demonstration is not veritably a martyr. Well, he is not a martyr in the rigorous theological meaning of the word, inasmuch as he dies in arms, whereas the martyr delivers himself, undefended and unarmed, into the hands of the executioner. But if I am asked what I think of the eternal salvation of a brave man who has consciously given his life in defence of his country's honor, and in vindication of violated justice, I shall not hesitate to reply that without any doubt whatever Christ crowns his military valor, and that death, accepted in this Christian spirit, assures the safety of that man's soul. 'Greater love than this no man hath,' said our Saviour, 'that a man lay down his life for his friends.' And the soldier who dies to save his brothers, and to defend the hearths and altars of his country, reaches this highest of all degrees of charity. He may not have made a clear analysis of the value of his sacrifice; but must we suppose that God requires of the plain soldier in the excitement of battle the methodical precision of the moralist or the theologian? Can we who revere his heroism doubt that his God welcomes him with love?

Christian mothers, be proud of your sons. Of all griefs, of all our human sorrows, yours is perhaps the most worthy of veneration. I think I behold you in your affliction, but erect, standing at the side of the Mother of Sorrows, at the foot of the Cross. Suffer us to offer you not only our condolence 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 they survived, 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?

Is it not true, my brethren, that God has the supreme art of mingling His mercy with His wisdom and His justice? And shall we not acknowledge that if war is a scourge for this earthly life of ours, a scourge whereof we cannot easily estimate the destructive force and the extent, it is also for multitudes of souls an expiation, a purification, a force to lift them to the pure love of their country and to perfect Christian unselfishness?

ENDURANCE.

We may now say, my brethren, without unworthy pride, that our little Belgium has taken a foremost place in the esteem of nations. I am aware that certain outlookers, 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 militarism is no sufficient rule of Christian citizenship.

On the 18th 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 France, the Queen of England, 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 died unworthily had we evaded our obligation by a mere feint of resistance. And now we need not repeat our first resolution; we exult in it. Before our Lord, to write a most solemn page in the history of our country, we resolved that it should be also a shining, also a glorious page. And as long as we are compelled to live proof of endurance, so long we shall exult.

All classes of our citizens have devoted their sons to the cause of their country; but the poorer part of the population have set the noblest example, for they have suffered also privation, cold, and famine. If I may judge of the general feeling from what I have witnessed in the humbler quarters of Malines, and in the most cruelly afflicted districts of my diocese, the people are everywhere in their endurance. They look to be righted; they will not fear of surrender.

Affliction is, in the hand of Divine Omnipotence, a two-edged sword. It wounds the rebellious, it sanctifies him who is willing to endure.

God proverbs us, as St. James has told us, but He is not a tempter of evils. All that comes from Him is good, a ray of light, a pledge of love. But every man is tempted by his own concupiscence. . . . Blessed is he that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him.

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

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