

sphere of warlike action is no longer confined to land and sea, but extends even to the heavens. Newly-invented weapons of destruction are being employed, powerful enough to demolish the strongest fortress, and to deal out death wholesale in its most ghastly forms. Shell and shrapnel have made sad havoc in many ancient and famous cities. Stately Gothic cathedrals, the glory of medieval times and the wonder of our own, have been irretrievably damaged: treasures of art and literature, such as never can be replaced, have been given to the flames; and the country that was lately a smiling garden and a hive of industry is now, owing to the ravages of war, a blackened, desolate waste. The loss of human life has been simply appalling. Past numbering are the brave hearts that rest in nameless graves on the plains of Belgium, or the hill slopes of Northern France. The sea, too, has claimed its roll of victims. Throughout the length and breadth of the Kingdom to-day, in the halls of the noble, as in the dwellings of the lowly, wives and mothers are weeping for the husbands and sons they shall never see again, or are looking out with anxious tearful expectancy for the safe return of those who are at the front. They went forth at the call of honor and duty to fulfil the treaty obligations of the Empire towards the Belgian nation—to defend her gallant people against the overwhelming forces of a ruthless despot, and to strike down the tyranny of a militarism that threatened the very existence of the British Empire and other European States.

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‘Their work so far has been crowned with a success which points to a complete and glorious victory in the future. We have evidences from many sources that British pluck and endurance have been nobly displayed in many a hard-fought field, while the dash and courage of our Irish soldiers bring back memories of the Old Brigade, and their fathers’ deeds of valor on the same historic ground. British and Irish now fight side by side in a common cause, and for the attainment of a common object. Past estrangement and bitterness are forgotten in the feeling of comradeship that has sprung up between them. Old feuds do not come up for discussion or settlement in the trenches or on the battlefield. They quit themselves like men and soldiers—they die together like brothers and loyal comrades, and when they fall their faces are ever turned to the foe. . . . The enemy must never get a footing on Irish soil or be seen in Irish waters. The gallant Irishmen who fell at Mons and Ypres, and in many another fierce contest, laid down their lives for Ireland’s sake, just as really as if they had poured forth their heart’s blood in her defence on their native soil.’

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After referring to the terrible results of the present conflict, and to the influence for good which it has exercised on the religious life of France—an influence due in great measure to the splendid examples of devotion and heroism of her soldier priests, his Eminence Cardinal Logue continues: ‘A consoling feature of the War is found in the reports which chaplains in the field give of the earnestness with which our Irish Catholic soldiers avail themselves of the spiritual aids which have been secured for them after some trouble. The record of their conduct in action proves that devotion to religion has not damped their ardor or robbed them of the dash which has so often carried Irish soldiers to the forefront in many a stricken field. Without any compulsion, such as exists in other countries, they have cheerfully come forward, and still continue to come forward, in large numbers for the defence of the Empire in her time of trial. They know the risks, and have courageously taken them. The long lists of casualties which daily appear are the best proof that they have done their duty with unflinching bravery. For the dear ones left to mourn the fate of those who have fallen a chief solace is the knowledge that, though death claimed them in the pride of their manhood, it did not find them unprepared.’

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‘Unfortunately there seems to be one department in which the heroism of those who risk their lives for

the welfare of the State can awaken neither a feeling of gratitude nor a sense of duty. The Admiralty, which has long persisted, during times of peace, in ignoring the claims of Catholic sailors, seems to some extent to persist in the same policy still amid the risks and chances of war. When I found it necessary to direct attention to this crying want many years ago I remember an old admiral, rising in the House of Commons, declared that no Papist rites should ever be celebrated on board of any of her Majesty’s ships. It is to be hoped that none of this spirit still lingers, but should it consistency demands that Papist sailors should be joined with Papist rites in the same exclusion. It is estimated that there are twenty-eight thousand Catholic sailors and marines on board the fleet, most of them Irish either by birth or descent. I have before me as I write a partial and very imperfect return of squadrons and ships: but it is sufficient to show that the provision made for the spiritual care of Catholic sailors is very inadequate. In a large number of ships, belonging to every class in the navy, from battleships to mine-sweepers, there seem to be neither Catholic chaplains nor facilities for Catholic sailors to attend to their religious duties. The conditions of modern naval warfare render this need the more pressing. When a catastrophe comes it is a holocaust, sudden and appalling, leaving no time for thought or preparation. Formerly when a ship was beaten she struck her colors, leaving the remnant of her company safe, with time to attend to the corporal and spiritual wants of the wounded: now, when a ship is beaten, she goes to the bottom, bearing with her all on board, dead and living, wounded and sound.’

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His Eminence points out that this discrimination against Catholics is neither fair, just, patriotic, nor politic. Both patriotism and good policy urge that there should be reform, and that Catholic sailors should have every opportunity of performing their religious duties. The safety of the country depends on the efficiency of the fleet, and therefore every inducement should be held out to those who are competent and ready to serve in the Navy.

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The Bishop of Killala appeals for fervent prayers for a speedy conclusion of the devastating War, and says: ‘From out the universal gloom of this awful conflict a bright ray of hope shines forth for our own beloved country. Party strife has ceased; friendly relations have been established; loyalty and goodwill accompany the realisation of Ireland’s aspirations, so that, with the termination of the War, we confidently await the dawning of the day of liberty, peace and prosperity of our native land. God grant we may not be disappointed.’

Notes

Cardinal Mercier’s Pastoral

Over half a million pamphlets containing long extracts from Cardinal Mercier’s Pastoral Letter have been printed for free distribution in all the Catholic churches and schools in England, Wales, and Scotland. Cardinal Bourne has written a foreword. When the Prussians forbade the letter in Belgium the Belgian school teachers made their children learn parts of it by heart, and thus the Cardinal’s words were spread abroad, despite the enemy.

A Warning to Bigots

The following comments appeared in London *Truth* for January 27 last:—‘Bigots of all denominations will do well to inwardly digest an experience which has befallen the Dalziel School Board. The Board dismissed one of its teachers because she joined the Catholic Church, and refused to pay her £20 compensation awarded her by the Education Department for dismissal. The teacher sued the Board for the money and won her case, and the Board has now decided not to