

The Catholic World

BELGIUM

CARDINAL MERCIER.

Cardinal Mercier, nothing daunted by his previous experience, issued recently to his priests and people a Lenten Pastoral. It is said that the Cardinal was allowed so much liberty by the Germans that he was able to celebrate Mass in his Cathedral at Malines on Sexagesima Sunday.

ENGLAND

DEATH OF AN OBLATE PROVINCIAL.

The British Province of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate has suffered a sad loss in the death of its Provincial, Father James O'Reilly, O.M.I., who passed away on the eve of the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. Father O'Reilly was born in the County of Cavan. He was ordained in France, and had ministered in many parts of England, notably at Leeds, where he was Superior for several years, and at Liverpool, where he was also Superior at Holy Cross.

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES.

The service at the Brompton Oratory on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes was indeed a magnificent function (writes a London correspondent). Father Bernard Vaughan, S.J., preached for 50 minutes, for he could not resist the fascination of the crowded audience. The Cardinal gave the Benediction. The King and Queen of Portugal and other important people were there with their humbler brethren. There have been many great functions at the Oratory in years gone by, but those who have witnessed them all state that never do they remember such a congregation as that gathered together on February 11. No doubt the war and the impossibility of having a pilgrimage this year made people more anxious thus to testify to the great devotion there is in England to Our Lady of Lourdes. The Duchess of Norfolk, who is the president of the Society of Our Lady of Lourdes, took a large part in organising this function.

FRANCE

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE HOLY SEE.

M. Alfred Capus, member of the Academie Française and editor of the *Figaro*, cannot be classed as a devout Catholic (writes the Paris correspondent of the *Irish Catholic*). Yet he declares in his journal that the resumption of diplomatic relations between France and the Vatican 'ceases to be a complicated problem and becomes a simple affair of commonsense.' Indifference in matters of patriotism was always rare in France, and at the present moment it is almost, if not quite, absent. On the other hand, even the most arrogant freethinkers cannot deny the new force Catholicism has acquired by the war. M. Capus attributes it to the common emotion of all Frenchmen at the safety of the country being in danger. That secret accord will, he contends, impart to future politics a spirit of tolerance. The prayers offered up throughout France for victory and peace, and the money collected in the streets of the towns and villages on the same day for the assistance of the families of the men called to arms in defence of the land, constitute a double symbolic manifestation of which it would be difficult to exaggerate the meaning. Indeed the editor of the *Figaro* is right in declaring that no one would now dare to pretend his convictions were wounded by the crowds of the faithful who recited the Pope's Prayer in the churches, and that for the future no politician, to please his electors, will dare disturb prayer in France. However, it is evident an eternal good understanding between citizens cannot be hoped for, but it is permissible to believe that the freethinker after the war will not be the same man he was before it broke out.

ROME

THE HOLY FATHER AND THE POLES.

By many charitable acts the Holy Father has shown that his heartfelt sympathy goes out to those who, owing to the calamities of the times, are suffering and in sorrow. He has provided for the support and education of five hundred children made orphans by the earthquake in Italy and has sent through Cardinal Gasparri a contribution of five hundred lire to the funds of the 'Friends of Belgium' by whom offerings are collected for the relief of the Belgian soldiers at the camp of Auvours, at the same time expressing his regret that his resources did not permit him to make a larger contribution. And now a Polish Catholic paper announces (says the *Catholic Times*) that the Holy Father has been greatly moved by compassion at the reports he has received of the misery caused to the Poles by the war and has come to the aid of the distressed with a handsome offering—an example of generosity which has been followed by the members of the Sacred College of Cardinals. Amidst all their vicissitudes the Poles have ever cherished their faith, and they are hoping that when the war is drawing to an end the influence of the Holy See will be used to help them to realise, as far as possible, their national aspirations. It may be taken for granted that all he can do will be done most readily by his Holiness Benedict XV. to ensure for them a prosperous and happy future.

THE HOLY FATHER'S NEUTRALITY.

Cardinal Bourne's visit to the Catholic chaplains with the forces at the front gives occasion to the *Guardian* to remind its readers of the curious fact that all chaplains in the army and navy, whether Anglican or Catholic or Nonconformist, are 'officially subject' to the Chaplain-General of the Forces or the Fleet, in each case a Protestant (says the *Catholic Times*). Apparently the official subjection amounts to very little and leads to no friction. And then after this information, the *Guardian* says: 'We must not forget to note that in the same speech his Eminence dwelt on the justice of the English cause and the fact that our war was "in defence of the Christian civilisation of Europe itself, against methods and principles which were barbarous and anti-Christian." The world once hoped for plain language from the Pope about the German atrocities, and Benedict XV. may possibly live to regret the "diplomacy" which sealed his lips.' This curious comment and contrast is quite unfair to the Pope. Cardinal Bourne is a British subject, free to express his opinion, and sure not to be blamed for doing so by anybody here or elsewhere. He speaks as a private individual. But the Pope is not a private individual. He is an official personage, on whom lies the solicitude for all the Churches. His position as Head of the Catholic Church throughout the world imposes on him the duty of neutrality as between the combatants. Suppose it is not possible; but suppose—that he took sides against us, threw 'diplomacy' to the winds, opposed the French and supported the Kaiser, would not the *Guardian* search the Scriptures for anathemas to hurl at his head?

SCOTLAND

THE BISHOP OF ARGYLL.

Right Rev. George J. Smith, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, recently attained the golden jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood, the happy event being suitably celebrated in Oban on February 17. A solemn religious service was held in the Pro-Cathedral in the forenoon, and in the evening Bishop Smith was entertained to a complimentary dinner by the clergy of his diocese, and was presented with a costly and beautiful chalice and various articles of altar furnishing. Bishop Smith was born in Banffshire in 1840, and was ordained in Paris in 1864. He was elevated to the episcopate in 1892.

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