

ticism, and on the unwholesome atmosphere of an unchristian over-culture. Our soldiers, before their march, renewed with Him in Holy Communion their covenant for life and death. The war is a judgment for all nations afflicted by it, and therefore a loud call to penance and expiation.

The Pastoral issued by the Hierarchy of Austria makes no reflections on the nations engaged in the war, and strives solely to turn all thoughts to the Sacred Heart:

'The Angel of Death is reaping a gruesome harvest; the flower of manhood is falling beneath the bloody stroke of his scythe. The tears of widows and orphans are flowing. The ancient miseries, too, of earth are abroad—poverty, want, sickness, and wasting away of lives. In such extremes we cast our eyes upon the Heart of Jesus, with His Cross and Crown of Thorns. He has not only fathomed the depths of human woe, but has descended into them Himself. That He Who alone was without sin bore all our sufferings before us, gives courage and strength to us in turn. May there henceforth be but one rivalry between us—that which consists in love of the Sacred Heart and of Holy Church.'

They trace the love of God for man through the centuries, and conclude by exhorting the people to consecrate themselves to Christ, and pray for a victory whose glory shall belong to God alone, to whom all the blessings of peace must be attributed.

Cardinal Mercier.

Cardinal Mercier's Pastoral is in the same lofty strain. It is inspired by the ardent patriotism of a great citizen and the fervent piety of a great priest. He holds up Christ, stricken and dying, as the model for stricken Belgium:

'The disciple is not greater than the Master. To rebel against pain, to revolt against Providence because it permits grief and bereavement, is to forget whence we came, the school in which we have been taught, the example that each of us carries graven in the name of a Christian. The truth is, that no disaster on earth, striking creatures only, is comparable with that which our sins provoked, and whereof God Himself chose to be the blameless victim.'

With this faith as a foundation, he speaks of patriotism and the wounds of our Belgian, French, and English soldiers. For, in truth, our soldiers are our saviours: pray daily for them, for victory. He shows how, in the hour of trial, all have risen nobly to heights of heroism, and continues:

Patriotism a Sacred Thing.

'Patriotism is a sacred thing, and a violation of national dignity is in a manner a profanation and a sacrilege. 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 the hearths and altars of his country reaches this highest of all the degrees of charity. This is the virtue of a single act of perfect charity; it cancels a whole lifetime of sins, and transforms a sinful man into a saint.'

Mothers of Belgium.

After calling on the mothers of Belgium to stand erect by the side of the Mother of Sorrows at the foot of the Cross, the Cardinal proclaims, with the assurance of 'one having power,' that 'affliction in the hands of the Omnipotent is a two edged sword. It wounds the rebellious, it sanctifies him who is willing to endure.' He points out our absolute dependence on God, and, after enumerating the appalling horrors of Belgium's martyrdom, he goes on to speak of her past faults in prosperity, and asks:—

'Have we not something to expiate? What have we made of Sunday Mass, of the restraints of modesty,

of reverence for marriage, of the spirit of penance, of respect for authority?'

Mercier and the Mass.

And this magnificent father of his people ends his Pastoral with a Catholic confidence that recalls the Prophets of the Old Law.

'Let us,' he cries, 'continue to pray, to do penance, to attend Holy Mass, and to receive Holy Communion for the sacred intention of our dear country. I recommend our parish priests to hold a funeral service on behalf of our fallen soldiers every Saturday.'

'As soon, in God's own time, as the sun of peace shall shine upon our country, we shall redress our ruins, shall restore shelter to those who have none; we shall rebuild our churches, and we shall hope to crown this work of reconciliation by raising upon the heights of the capital of Belgium, free and Catholic, a national Basilica of the Sacred Heart, where annually we shall solemnly celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart. And in every region of the diocese the clergy will organise an annual pilgrimage of thanksgiving to one of the privileged Sanctuaries of the Blessed Virgin in order to pay special honor to the protectrix of our national independence and the Universal Mediatrix of the Christian Commonwealth.'

How our hearts thrill as we look upon this splendid figure, towering, a veritable Colossus, above stricken Belgium, and rousing the world by his words of fire! Oh, the strength of the faith that makes such a pronouncement possible! While his country still quivers beneath a hell-burst, a wilderness of smoking roof-trees, of hearths ensanguined by the blood of her murdered children, with the roar of battle in his ears, he stands, calm and confident, and looks for redress to Jesus and Mary.

The Pope Speaks.

And from him who sits on the throne of Christ on earth comes the same twofold cry—a cry of anguish because of the sufferings of his loved ones, and a cry of warning to those who look not beyond the narrow limits of Time. Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XV., addresses the following touching words of more than fatherly tenderness to his flock. And as we read, let us remember that it is the wish of God that every soul on earth should know and acknowledge that voice as the voice of him of whom Christ has declared, 'He that heareth you, heareth Me':—

'But when We look from the heights of this Apostolic See towards the Lord's flock committed to Our care, We are filled with horror and inexpressible grief by the sight of this war. From the Good Shepherd Jesus Christ, whose place We hold in the government of the Church, We have this very duty, that We embrace with the bowels of paternal love all the lambs and sheep of His flock.'

Penance and Prayer.

His Holiness exhorts all Bishops to implore God 'that He may put away this scourge of His wrath which He exacts of the people, penance for their sins; to pray to the Virgin Mother of Him in Whom the Eternal Father willed to reconcile all things, making peace through the Blood of the Cross, both as to the things on earth and the things that are in heaven.' (Coloss. i. 20.)

The Mountain of the Neutrality of Christ.

With a broadness of vision that comes only to those who understand the greatness of the destiny of man, our Holy Father and the great Princes of the Church, while their hearts are wracked with anguish at the sight of the sufferings of their flocks, do not hesitate to point to the rough road over Calvary that must be trodden by the sinner. Standing on the Mountain of Neutrality that belongs to Christ, they fearlessly denounce the downward path along which so many were moving, and tell the erring that this war is a scourge in the hand of an Insulted God.

How close to heaven this all-embracing charity of Christ lifts man! It is the charity of Him Whose delight is to be with the children of men, of Him Who ever hungers for the return of sinners, and ever preached