

ROME LETTER

(From our own correspondent.)

February 11.

From Warsaw has been received here a copy of a Pastoral issued to the people of Poland by the bishops of that unhappy country, which is remarkable as a touching expression of gratitude towards the Pope for the efforts recently made by his Holiness on behalf of the Poles. The bishops say:—

'Over the entire territory of Poland is heard the sound of lamentation, of weeping, of sorrow. Misery torments the people; hunger depresses them; diseases torture them; death is exterminating them. Abroad the sword kills them and at home death carries them off.

'Oh, people of Poland, ye who yearn and seek for bread, you are distraught with weeping, and your tears flow, because, truly, a sorrow cannot be found like unto your sorrow. Who was the first to think of you in your misfortune? Who first compassionated you in your sorrow? Who first spoke for you? The Father of Christians, the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XV., the friend of the Polish people. He himself declared, in the presence of the Polish bishops of Galicia, he had long entertained for you a special affection, for he knew your love of and faith in Jesus and the Apostolic See. According as the miseries and the blows that fell to our lot increased and became more heavy, love and compassion grew in his heart for you. He felt pity for you and your sorrows, just as a father pities his children. This father, who weeps over his sons, unceasingly asks God for aid on behalf of Poland. He was the first to send you generous help, and he felt sad at not being able to send you as much as his generous heart wished.

'But this was not enough for him. He asked all the Catholic nations to pray for us and to aid us in our misery. Just consider, people of Poland. At the request of her Father, the whole Church—bishops, priests, and faithful of every country, of every tongue, but of one faith—set aside one solemn day for Poland, and in the churches of the entire world prayers went up for our unhappy country, and liberal offerings were given for poor, famished Poland, as brothers are wont to do for brothers.

'See, then. You are neither orphans, nor abandoned, nor forgotten in the great world. In your sorrow and misfortunes your Father and your brothers have been mindful of you, since you are part of a grand and glorious family, and you have a Father who is filled with charity and compassion. Therefore in your faith lies your power, and in it rests your future.

'What return then will you make the Holy Father for all he has done for you? You must give him heart for heart, and prayer for prayer! You will give to the Pope your warm, sincere love, your believing Polish soul. And on a day, which the bishops will fix, all Poland will pray for her Pontiff, as, on his initiative, the Catholic world has prayed for all Poland. On that solemn day, which will be dear to our heart, beloved people, fill the churches, and for the beloved Pontiff, the friend of the Poles, send up burning prayers to Jesus and to Mary, Queen of Poland. Go in numbers to the Divine Table, and offer your Holy Communion for the intention of the Pope. And when your children ask you: "What function is this?" you will reply: "We have a father on earth, and for that father to-day the whole Polish people, bathed in tears, prays; we pray to the Lord before all nations, and we invoke the name of the Lord."

'May the Lord God then give you heart so that you may praise Him and do His Will. May He hear your prayers and not abandon you in this life.'

The signatures of the bishops of Poland follow.

THE HOLY FATHER AND BELGIUM.

It is only after the war we will know whether Belgium or Poland suffered the more in the European conflict. Anyhow, Benedict XV. has done for both all that even a Pope could do. But how did the rumor get abroad that the Holy Father refused Cardinal Mercier's request to enquire into the alleged German atrocities in Belgium? The fact is his Eminence did not even ask the Pope to do so, whatever the newspapers say or think to the contrary. The bishops of Belgium do not wish to play the part of the Pope's enemies by trying to compromise him in any way. This is what has been attempted this week in that widespread report as to the Nuncio of Brussels being made the channel for a separate peace between Belgium and Germany. An official note denies the thing *in toto*. 'We are authorised to declare,' it says—(a) Contrary to what the authoritative and esteemed personage states, the Apostolic Nuncio, after the coming of the Germans, followed the King and the Government first to Antwerp, then to Le Havre, as did the other diplomats, and he only returned to Brussels when some Catholics worthy of all trust mentioned that the Nuncio's work would be of greater use at Brussels than at Le Havre. (b) The step in question was without any kind of foundation. It is absolutely false that Germany applied to the Apostolic Nuncio to carry the pretended proposal with a view to a separate peace with Belgium. Consequently Mgr. Tacci could not transmit it to the King and the Government of Belgium; these could not give it any sort of reception, favorable or unfavorable; and the Holy See could not intervene in any way, directly or indirectly.'

NOTES.

Among the strongest supporters of the War Loan in Italy are the members of the Hierarchy, several of whom have addressed circulars to their dioceses on the matter.

Besides requesting Germany, Austria, and Bulgaria to treat with consideration the Servian people who remain in Servia, the Holy Father has donated 5000 francs for those in exile. One of the saddest sights I have ever seen is that of these poor refugees walking about Rome, aimlessly and silent. Italy is doing her share for them.

After presenting his credential letters to Benedict XV., the newly appointed Ambassador of Spain, Senor Calbeton, officially visited Cardinal Vannutelli in his capacity of Dean of the Sacred College. It is pleasing to remark that the Spanish Embassy to the Holy See is the highest post desired by Spain's diplomatic corps.

His Holiness the Pope has sent to Mrs. A. B. Spreckles, of San Francisco, a photograph of himself, with the following message: 'We send from the heart our apostolic benediction to our dear daughter, Mrs. Spreckles, and congratulate her for what she has done for the benefit of the Belgians who suffered so much of late.'

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