



An Open Letter to All Our Readers

Our beloved Readers:

The Mountain Province belongs to the Philippines, and the Missionary Work in that Province belongs therefore to the Catholic Church in this country. We, Belgian Missionaries, were sent, in 1907, to this missionfield by His Holiness the Pope to continue the conversion of the Igorrotes.

It was our duty to try making Catholics of this country interested in the Christianization of their Mountain Province.

We have done our best to comply with this duty.

This Missionary Work, committed to our care, is today in imminent danger on account of adverse circumstances created by the existing new World War.

It is equally our duty to make this danger known to whom it concerns.

The Little Apostle-El Misionero has started a new year on June 1940. 1940 is already a year of great and transforming events, and there is no reason why we

should not expect to meet still greater unpleasant surprises in things of the world. These things are in such dreadful turmoil that no one can guess how this present year will end. But there is one thing we are quite sure of; namely, that whatever may still occur, it will always turn out to be for the greater good of those who love God. We are in God's hands, and what He keeps, is well kept. In the midst of all frightful events which seem to menace our very existence, we can always rally with security to the outcry of St. Michael: "If God is with us, who can be against us!" But the unshaken confidence we have in Almighty God must go together with a firm determination of doing our best, using the means of salvation which Holy Providence puts at our disposition; the adage, "Do your best, and God will do the rest," shall ever remain true.

Let us apply this to the Missions in the Apostolic Prefecture of the Mountain Province. You have



The lonely King of Belgium, Leopold III, on his sorrowful way of the Cross.
(From 1935, at the funeral of the Belgians' beloved Queen).

received our ANNUAL REPORT, in which you read the progress made during the past year. The Little Apostle or El Misionero, our mission magazine, comes regularly to you, telling you of our endeavors to win for Christ and His Church the remaining Igorrote pagans in the Mountain Province. After 33 years of hard labor and heroic patience, our missionaries rejoiced in the ordination to the Holy Priesthood of the first native of Kalingaland; they had good reasons to be hopeful for the future, and they kept in their heart a holy enthusiasm of creating by and by a native clergy in the Apostolic Prefecture of the Mountain Province. Having brought the number of Christians from less than two hundred (in 1917) to 76,820 (1939), having instilled Catholic education in the hearts of these peoples with the help of schools, dormitories and catechetical work, the missionaries rejoiced in the happy fact of seeing priestly vocations rise among the Igorrote youth. But, lo, there appeared again the terrible scourge of war! We remember what this meant in 1914-18 when our missions in the Mountain Province were on the brink of ruin. In 25 years Belgium has been invaded a second time, brothers and nephews of our missionaries are slain on horrible battlefields, and we do not know if our parents, relatives, and religious superiors are among the fear-stricken refugees or if they suffer under the tyranny of a merciless enemy. With broken hearts

we lift from the depth of sorrow our voice to God: "Lord, what have we done to deserve such a heavy cross?" But, thanks to God, we have still the Faith to enlighten us, knowing that God's ways are not our ways, and that, out of love and mercy for the weak and guilty, He often times allows the innocent to be the victim of His offended justice. Did our beloved Saviour not say: "The servant is not more than the Master; what they have done to Me, they will do to you?" With complete resignation and love of God and of all men, we put all our confidence in St. Peter's words: "Partaking of the sufferings of Christ rejoice, that when His Glory be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed; for that which is of the honor, glory and power of God, and that which is His Spirit, resteth upon you."

Confident in God's Holy Providence, we are also confident in you, our dear Readers. We know by happy experience that Filipino Catholics love missionaries and mission work in the Mountain Province. During 1914-18 they have done their best to save their Home Missions. We are confident that now again they will stand for their safety.

It is quite natural that missionaries receive the greater part of support for themselves and their work from benefactors in the homeland. This is certainly true for us, Belgian missionaries in the

Mountain Province, although we have to be ever grateful for the valuable help always received from Filipino Catholics. However, the sad fact is that, deprived of the monthly alms our missionaries received from Belgium, we find ourselves obliged to close many schools and dormitories and to dismiss a good number of our catechists. You understand as well as I do that strictly material work can be suspended for the time being without much damage, but to stop the work which is spiritual involves an unavoidable spiritual disaster.

Our only hope to avoid this disaster lies in the charity of our Readers of *The Little Apostle* and *El Misionero*. Of course, there are thousands of Catholics in these Islands who would gladly volunteer to come to our rescue if they knew

of our present need.

Please, help us, and kindly send us also names and addresses of charitable people who have a heart to save God's work in the Mountain Province.

You know that we ever try our best repaying you with prayers. Our Family Circle and our monthly Novena of Last Resort are there to prove it; but besides all this, you are equally included in all our prayers and Holy Masses, and you partake of the missionary work in the Mountain Province.

I finish this urgent appeal with a hearty: "God bless you and spare you and the Philippines from the horrors of war."

Yours ever gratefully in J. and M.,
The Little Apostle-El Misionero
By Rev. José De Samber.

