

## THE CATHOLIC PRESS

### THE EDITOR

THE title is that of one of Lord Acton's *Essays on Church and State* (recently collected by Mr Douglas Woodruff and to be reviewed in a later issue of BLACKFRIARS). What he wrote in *The Rambler* in 1859 might scarcely be expected to have an imperative meaning in the immensely changed circumstances of 1952, but Lord Acton's prophetic quality of mind, his capacity to see beyond the immediately conditioning details of time and place, is remarkably revealed in this survey of the function of a Catholic review. His own difficulties as an editor are well known, and many of them belonged to the particular religious climate of his time. But his vindication of the absolute demands of truth is a reminder that the Faith can only be served by fidelity: fidelity to truth wherever it may be found, so that through its recognition the single Truth of all may be declared and served.

'How often', he writes, 'has the eagerness and presumption which has based the defence of religion on proofs which later discoveries have exploded covered her with the appearance of ridicule! Those who are too impatient to wait till their wine is fermented are rewarded with a particularly nasty draught. Every branch of learning pursued for the sake of its own conclusions will result in the vindication of religion, and in the discomfiture of those who believe in their antagonism. The progress of knowledge is often more beneficial to the cause of religious truth than any professed apology.'

Among the many good reasons for acknowledging Lord Acton's greatness in this year, which sees the fiftieth anniversary of his death, should be a recognition of his singleness of mind in serving the Faith through the service of truth. 'We must have confidence in the power of argument and reason to give victory to truth.' His words should remain the device of any Catholic writing, inspired as it must be by 'the principle of independent inquiry, within the bounds, and for the promotion, of the Catholic faith'.