

COMMENTARY

POPE PIUS XII. On the occasion of the election of the late Holy Father it was his eloquence as a preacher that the then Editor of BLACKFRIARS singled out for mention when making his act of filial homage. This was done on the basis of some personal reminiscences of Cardinal Pacelli's happy and friendly contact with the Order of Preachers of which he had become a Tertiary in December, 1935.

At the time, perhaps, this may have seemed a novel and even a partisan approach. After all, it was Pius XI's Cardinal Secretary of State's skill as a statesman, his quality as a consummate diplomat in the highest and finest Vatican traditions, which evidently marked him out as the only possible choice for the See of Peter in the dark days of March 1939. And yet, for us at the other end of this great Pontificate, it is not so much, perhaps, on Pius XII the statesman that our chief sense of loss is focussed, as on him as preacher, the tireless herald of the truth of Christ. It is the preacher we mourn, and also—for the preacher is only great when he is distinguished in these other two capacities as well—the priest and the pastor.

Of him as preacher the astonishingly packed volumes of his allocutions and addresses remain to bear abundant witness. His speeches cover a wide variety of themes: in recent years very few groups visited or met in Rome and did not receive an audience and an address from this most accessible of Popes. On all such occasions his words revealed the great pains he had taken to come to grips with the technicalities, the interests, and the problems of the specialists to whom he was speaking. But always, too, they revealed his consuming desire that all such interests and problems should find their due place and their only means of solution in the context of the fullness of revealed truth and the fullness of Christian living. Pius XII's frequent clarifications of moral problems are interesting in this connection. In the selective and often garbled form in which we grew accustomed to find them first reported in the popular press, these decisions resembled in style the traditionally cold and laconic *responsa* of the Roman Congregations. But if one troubled to look up the complete text, one usually found a warm, eloquent and revealing homily where these problems and their solution were related to the Christian

moral life as a whole. The truth is that all the late Pope's great intellectual gifts bore the stamp above all of the preacher. He was not an outstanding figure, in his own right, as a theologian, if it is the *science* of theology we have in mind when we use that term. But with that *theologia cordis* which is the great preacher's essential quality, and lacking which he utters words only, Pius XII was most richly endowed.

A writer of a sympathetic article appearing in a London evening newspaper the day the Pope died, spoke of him as 'a connoisseur of ritual'. And indeed his priesthood, together with his awareness of himself as a priest, was always most apparent. But behind all the exactness and the grace which he put into the outward gestures of worship, and which so struck all who saw them, lay that deep sense of the essential meaning of Christian liturgy to which the Encyclical *Mediator Dei* gave expression. Quite apart, however, from the priesthood of Holy Orders in which he held the supreme degree, Pius XII was also outstanding in that 'royal priesthood' in which all Christians by virtue of their Baptism share. In our time one of the principle challenges to that common priesthood is the need to win over for Christ, to 'baptize', the new techniques which modern science has put at man's disposal. The Pope was universally known for the warm welcome he gave to all that was best in technological advance: it earned for him the title of the 'modern' Pope. It is not so much, however, in the welcome as in the use he made of this that he stands out as a model to all of us. It is easy to welcome modern 'gadgets'—from cameras to atomic power stations—and also become a slave to them. What the Pope taught us by his personal example—one has only to think of his employment of the new techniques of communication—was the controlled, the *devoted* use of these only for the greater glory of God.

Lastly, the pastor. Pope Pius XII himself said that he was this above all. Countless pilgrims to Rome never tire of speaking of his wonderful fatherly solicitude seemingly held to them individually in no matter how large a crowd. But even the least-travelled of his flock have felt profoundly the effect of his pastoral care: an apt symbol of our awareness of this is those thronged evening Requiems which followed his death.

Pius XII has now passed into history; and it will be for history

(continued on page 488)

society, and his detailed account of the social and racial background provides evidence which courts can scarcely consider.

MADE FOR MAN (Methuen, 15s.) is A. P. Herbert's latest assault on Anglican inconsistencies in the matter of remarrying the divorced. Written as an amusing novel, this is none the less a skilful piece of propaganda, and includes, among other delights, a fascinating account of an imaginary debate in the House of Lords. In a sense, Sir Alan Herbert's target is too easy to hit, and his familiar skill in exploring the jungle of legal oddities finds plenty of opportunities here.

ENGLISH SHORT STORIES OF TODAY (Oxford University Press, 12s. 6d.; school edition, 7s. 6d.) is a second selection made by Dan Davin, including such established contemporaries as Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene, Somerset Maugham and Angus Wilson. Most of the stories are more than familiar, but the purpose of the book is obviously to provide schools with representative examples of short-story writing in England today, and in this it certainly succeeds.

(continued from page 443)

—not us—to make the final judgment on his Pontificate. But whatever that judgment will be, it must needs take into account the impact on the men of his time, as that has been almost unanimously witnessed to in the past few weeks, of a great preacher, priest and pastor who by his personal example unwaveringly reminded the modern world of the need for holiness.

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As this number of **BLACKFRIARS** goes to press before the meeting of the Conclave, it is, anonymously, to the next successor of St Peter, as Bishop of Rome and Vicar of Christ, that the Editor pays his filial and religious homage.