

EDITORIAL

CRITICISM is the sauce of life ; and **BLACK-FRIARS**, though it has sometimes looked longingly for more staple things, has received more of this particular sauce than is usually given to the newly born. Still, we must not urge infancy as a coward's plea for shirking criticism. We are not of those who cannot take sauce, whether served in the form of vinegar or insolence ; but we would point out that just as a surfeit of sauce makes food poisonous instead of palatable, so too an excess of criticism may defeat its own end, if its end is to help and not to hinder.

Our special complaint is that the critics, taken as a whole, have not been sufficiently helpful. Instead of illuminating, they have cast us into dark bewilderment. They do not put us to confusion with their unanimity : they disconcert and perplex us with their wild disagreements. At one and the same time we are " too lofty " and " too heavy " ; we are " inclined to be dull " and " given to flippancy " ; we are " not definite enough " and " too outspoken and overbold." These general statements are levelled not at the particular work of any individual contributor, but at the review as a whole, so that a person who knew us only from our critics would picture us as a fantastic monster that combined the irresponsible frivolity of youth with the staid dignity of a maiden aunt—a cross between a butterfly and a pancake.

No doubt all these criticisms are subjectively true. Different angles of vision indicate the different points of view. Sometimes the view depends on the colour

BLACKFRIARS, Vol. I, No. 4.

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of the spectacles, sometimes on which end of the telescope is nearest the eye. Just as bats in the belfry will ruin the chimes, so certain passions and prejudices may colour the vision : anger makes men see red, jealousy yellow and spleen green. We are not accusing our critics of labouring under these emotions ; but only lodging a protest that when criticisms mutually contradict one another and, as it were, cancel out, we are absolved from responsibility. When we are told that *hic et nunc* we are too red, too yellow and too green, we confess ourselves unequal to the task of taking the comments as practical advice to be followed in any effort to mend our ways.

Perhaps the unkindest cut of all was from the critic who asked, not exactly why cumbered we the ground, but questioned the necessity for our existence. Now, while we are not so presumptuous as to claim to be indispensable (what a circulation if we were !), we do think all our efforts will be in vain if we do not fulfil a need. To show that we are in some small way realizing our ideal, let us quote the following from Mr. Hilaire Belloc's paper on *Nationalization* which appeared in our May issue :

“ The Capitalists not only own the land and the machinery and the rest of it, they also own the avenues of information. *For instance, I could not publish such an essay as this in any one of the great Capitalist papers or in any one of the great Capitalist reviews. They would not print it.* It is the common experience of all those who deal seriously with these

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problems that they are confined to special organs of opinion which reach but a few.”

Whatever its other defects and limitations, BLACK-FRIARS is not tongue-tied by Capitalists and will always provide space for any writer who wishes to deal seriously with these pressing questions of the day.

We would call attention to Father Vincent McNabb's paper in our current number on *The Lambeth Conference*. Therein he insists upon the significance of the Conference, deals sympathetically with the idea of reunion and suggests certain principles of reconciliation. By reunion he means the only possible solution which would be at once a reunion and a healing of schism, namely reunion with Rome. The difficulties in the way cannot be exaggerated, yet they can be overcome, but not without understanding and sympathy. Other and perhaps greater schisms have been healed, and any attempt to end what has been so long the tragedy and scandal of Christendom should meet with all the support and sympathy we can give.

THE EDITOR.

