

EXTRACTS

FROM CORRESPONDENCE

A SUGGESTION for a book on the Martyrs: 'Going through Dom Bede Camm's *Birthday Book* I thought what an interesting compilation could be made illustrating the different mentalities, the ones who so to speak boasted of pain, the others who were content with just getting through, the marvellous array of jokes and confounding repartees, the woman interest—for example Louisa de Carvajal—the '*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*' theme . . . The theme of "Merrie England" which some great men appear to scorn, could be well illustrated by more than one incident—above all the superb answer to the Minister who rebuked the martyr for jokes: "It is indeed no joking matter for me, but you cannot deny that the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." I like specially too the story of the martyr who said the sections of the Angelus at the first three steps of the ladder. Perhaps some doctor would examine the question of the martyrs who appear to have been conscious when their own hearts were shown to them.'

COMFORTERS OF CHRIST: A correspondent follows up the idea of a League of Penance by tackling the difficult word 'Victim', which also should convey the fundamental attitude of the martyr:

'When one thinks of what being a 'victim' meant in the case of such married people as Bl. Anna Gesualda Taigi, and such consecrated virgins as St Margaret Mary, one might well quail from the idea, but it is safe to say that they were very specially chosen by God in that character, and it may be tentatively suggested that though all the saints are saints, and therefore people of complete self-surrender to God, they were not all pounded in the mortar of God's justice like Bl. Anna and St Margaret. And the word 'victim' may be accepted in a sense which need terrify no one, and yet provide our Lord with a large army of comforters among 'ordinary' folk. Perhaps in that very statement there lies a suggestion. To be "comforters of Christ" is a more attractive way of expressing the same truth, just as "love of our Lord" is a warm way of talking about "holiness".'

'In his Encyclical on *Universal Reparation to the Sacred Heart* of 8th May, 1928, Pope Pius XI issued an invitation to Catholics in general to become comforters of Christ. "To the duty of reparation", he says, "we are bound by a more powerful motive of justice and love." It is interesting to observe how the Little Flower says that she can understand anybody blenching at the idea of offering himself a victim to the Justice of God, and yet she is mystified by anybody quailing before a similar offering to the merciful Love of God. Her own act of Victim

hood was couched in terms of the merciful Love of God. She asked for a legion of souls who would do the same. Surely it is not fanciful to think that that great client of St Teresa of Lisieux, Pius XI, had her in mind when he wrote the encyclical, particularly when he said, "By the favour of the Holy Spirit, there is also a great increase in the number of the faithful, both men and women, who valiantly strive to make satisfaction to the Divine Heart . . . who do not fear even to offer themselves to Christ as victims. Whoever ponders with love over what we have been saying, and impresses it deeply upon his heart, will undoubtedly not only hate sin and shun it as the greatest of all evils, but will offer himself to the Divine Will, and use every means in his power to compensate for the offences committed against the Divine Majesty, by constant prayer, by voluntary mortification, and by the patient acceptance of all the trials that may come upon him—in fact, by living his whole life in the spirit of reparation".

The League of Penance has its charter ready-made in the above words, and the charter is largely-enough conceived to include 'ordinary' people . . . The function of the Angel of the Agony was in great part to represent to our Lord the reparative actions that would be performed down the ages by all souls of good-will, from the sublime reparation of Mary, along through the dependent reparation of chosen souls, to the lesser reparation (but how valuable to him who acknowledges a cup of cold water!) of ordinary men and women. It is then a real truth, if a mystical one, that they who accept the Pope's invitation console Jesus Christ, making up for the mockery. Of course Jesus Christ is not suffering here and now, but 'a lover will understand what I mean'. If our Lord's Passion is as valuable as if he were suffering here and now for me, surely it is a legitimate expression to say that by reparation I comfort him here and now. There is no past and future with God but only an 'eternal now', and the Passion of Christ takes on something of the timelessness of God for he is the Lamb 'slain from the foundation of the world'.

There is another angle from which to regard the matter. 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?', said our Lord to the vessel of election. Paul was persecuting Christ's members, and was therefore persecuting Christ, as truly as one cannot have a pain in the foot without the mind being conscious of the pain. If Christ suffers in his members, he is also consoled by his members. We fill up the things that are wanting to the Passion of Christ by taking the merits supplied by our Head to whose Passion nothing can possibly be wanting in substance, and applying them to ourselves and our own generation. 'The whole body of Christians, rightly called by the Prince of the Apostles "a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood", must offer sacrifice for sins, both for

themselves and for the whole human race, just as every priest "taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God".' (Encyclical) . . .

A CHALLENGE from inside the cloister comes in another letter: 'A Carmelite life in the world does not seem to be really possible, for the essential "stripping" could never be accomplished outside Enclosure or the Rule, nor could it be born. May I suggest that it is a great pity so much is made of "contemplative life" in the world now. It seems to me to be misleading and to tend to lead souls to think they can attain that which only the "stripping" of enclosed life could accomplish. In view of the difficulties of the purification and the unearthliness to which it calls us it seems that very rarely does God give that grace to get rid of self in all its forms while living in the world . . . I do not mean that one must be a Carmelite to be a contemplative! But the union at which we aim takes the capacity of the "whole man" and would be very difficult to attain while caring of necessity for the things of this world.'

This point of view demands serious consideration by those who set the high ideal of contemplation consciously before them.

THE IRISH ECCLESIASTICAL REVIEW continues to serve its readers well by printing original Roman documents. Of particular interest in the April issue is the instruction on the constitution *Sponsa Christi*. Here the laws regarding enclosure and the works the nuns are able to undertake are elucidated as well as the new plans for 'federation'.

TIJDSCHRIFT VOOR GEESTELIJK LEVEN (Louvain) in its March-April issue contains an article on the Paschal mystery as a mirror of the heavenly life, showing how important this was for the early Christians who saw the secret of Baptism as a constant death leading to the new and heavenly life.

LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

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