

*attacks on civilians.*' He seems to admit (p. 329) that the forms and methods of modern warfare are *execrable*.

If after these admissions Mr. McDermott still thinks it lawful for a Christian to take part in modern warfare, it can only be that he has mistaken the case of the *Pax* group which he criticises, thinking that if he refutes any belief of any member of *Pax* he has refuted the whole case.

There is one argument accepted by all members of *Pax*: That though a just war is abstractly possible, a general war such as is now feared could not be just, since the means we know to be contemplated are themselves unjust. These unjust means are: First and foremost, deliberate attacks upon civilians; also, hate propaganda; also, the irresponsible use of modern weapons generally.

This argument must be accepted or refuted on its own merits. If it is accepted, the main question is settled: whatever the consequences, a Christian may not take part in a war he knows to be unjust. If it is to be refuted, its premisses must be met (*e.g.*, it must be proved that deliberate attacks on civilians are not contemplated—in spite of the well-known words of Lord Baldwin and the cold pronouncements of military experts). Most critics of the *Pax* pamphlets merely avoid the argument, preferring to attack certain beliefs held by this or that writer. These beliefs concern the causes of war; the possibilities and the means of avoiding war; the rights and wrongs of past wars; even the importance of Michael Angelo. What I think of these things does not matter. I repeat that the main question is: Can one take part in a modern war without *doing evil*?—and add that this question is not answered by discussing the problems of *suffering evil*.

Yours, etc.

ANOTHER LAYMAN.

### 'FLOWERING RIFLE.'

*To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS.*

SIR,—I must resolutely disregard the red herrings drawn across my path by the correspondents who give such a sinister reading of my notice of Roy Campbell's *Flowering Rifle*. I criticised the book only on literary grounds, and mentioned that works like Auden's *Spain* and Spender's *Vienna* were also poor art because of their excessive political preoccupations; and because I reject inferior Leftist art along with Rightist work, I apparently suggest that the Rightist writer is Leftist. A re-

markable piece of reasoning to come from a great theological college.

It is precisely on literary grounds that the critics neglect to base their criticism. The book is lyrical invective at best, and in trying to make an epic of it, the poet has executed a mechanical exercise, which oftenest sounds like a brass band at its brassiest repeating 'Land of Hope and Glory' *ad nauseam*. The language of the less prosy parts is worn-out 'poetical' currency like 'golden,' 'scarlet,' 'silver,' 'storm-red,' while often the faded literary metaphors of 'rhyme,' etc., are used to jolt the poem into life. The author himself says the poem is not meant to emulate people like Claudel, and we can easily agree when we read such bathos as :

' Toledo, here, against the morning sky  
Like some great battle-cruiser from the fight  
Returned with Victory (terrific sight ! )'

—the capitals being used to galvanise the cliché into some shadow of life. But above all, the epic lacks the *structure* of an epic, and is largely a broken record of literary quarrels.

As for the Christianity of the poem it is of the retrospective picturesque kind, dwelling with a fond nostalgia on the past, instead of being a living document of the Christianity of to-day : the anti-semitism, half-assimilated theology (especially of the Cross), special pleading, venomous flogging of dead horses—all these I omitted to mention, because I was making a literary criticism, but surely at best it is the Christianity of an immature mind, and not revealing 'the grounds of credibility for a very remarkable conversion' as these writers would have us believe.

Yours faithfully,

YOUR REVIEWER.