

BLACKFRIARS

THE FRENCH CATHOLIC PRESS

The numbers of *La Vie Intellectuelle* for April 25th and May 10th contain an article of encouraging frankness on the FRENCH CATHOLIC PRESS. In the writer's view that Press is in urgent need of conversion. Too often that which should be the chief means of the apostolate of the laity has become the organ of defence for a political party or a social class, and lives in fear of its subscribers. It tends to be aggressively nationalist and militarist, with a contempt of the League of Nations and a hatred even of the idea of disarmament. It inculcates 'a superstitious worship of the past which by a grave error it confuses with tradition,' and manifests 'a puerile phobia of progress.' It is empty of doctrine and compares unfavourably with the Communist Press, which is packed with dogmatic principles. If it 'publishes religious news, defends the liberty of teaching and reproduces photos of the Princes of the Church,' it thinks it has done its duty. The writer stigmatises this attitude as 'frivolity perfumed with incense.' Intellectually, in comparison with the secular Press, it is of an 'afflicting mediocrity.' It fears ideas and prefers instead 'anecdotes or facts to support familiar theses, a sort of puerile and mediocre apologetic for the use of minds brought up on manuals.' In the writer's view this 'intellectual wretchedness' is one of the great causes of the indifference of our time to the Faith.

We may note also as of special interest the documents given in the numbers for April 25th and May 25th, from German episcopal pronouncements and the press with regard to the Church's attitude to the new regime in Germany. Certain elements of the Nazi programme remain condemned, but since what was only a party has become the government the Church has given her traditional allegiance to the properly constituted authority. No charge of opportunism can be maintained. M. Gilson gives an excellent comparative study of the weakness of later scholasticism and that of modern philosophy in the number of May 10th, and a full report of his brilliant lecture at the St. Albert celebrations in Paris is to be found in the number for May 25th. There is a good study of André Gide by J. Madaule in the number for May 10th, and Isabella Rivière writes of the relations between Jacques Rivière and Gide in the number for April 25th. An appreciation of the life and work of Josephine Butler, the great Protestant Englishwoman, the friend of Cardinal Manning, who spent her life fighting for the dignity and freedom of unfortunate women, is to be found in the number for May 25th.

A.M.