

BLACKFRIARS

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TWENTY-ONE YEARS

IN 1921 the Editor of BLACKFRIARS was able to write: 'To-day, the first of April, BLACKFRIARS keeps its first birthday. There are some—optimists as well as pessimists—who believed we should never achieve twelve months of life. The fear, expressed in our first number, that our career, as witness to the truth, might be as short lived as that of the Holy Innocents has happily not been confirmed.' Despite all initial prophecies and fears, the review has survived to celebrate its twenty-first birthday with as much vigour and hope as its first. This success is due in large measure to the energy and enthusiasm of Fr. Bede Jarrett, Fr. Bernard Delany and Fr. Hilary Carpenter, and we are happy to have the inspiration of the last two behind us still. Fr. Delany, the first Editor, deserves the laurels at this celebration, for not only did he toil in launching the new review and keeping it buoyant for its first ten years, but also it is mainly due to his energy that it did not founder in the crisis of last summer, when the French defeat had its repercussions even on the monthly review edited by the English Dominicans. But at the twenty-first birthday celebrations we must not forget the large number of contributors whose eminence, wit and perspicacity have marked a distinguished path for the life of BLACKFRIARS. Mr. Joseph Clayton appeared in the very first number, and his tribute to the founder, Fr. Bede Jarrett, in this number is one of a score of articles that he has contributed since then. And there have been many like him, among whom we must single out Fr. Vincent McNabb for special gratitude. As we turn over the pages of the twenty-one volumes we see memorable names: G.K.C., Hilaire Belloc, and Maurice Baring; Fr. D'Arcy, Fr. Martindale and Mgr. Knox; Helen Parry Eden, Christopher Dawson,

Shane Leslie, Denis Gwynn and Eric Gill—these are only a fraction of the names, and we purposely omit the small army of Dominicans with whom of course BLACKFRIARS is identified. The final and in many ways the most honoured toast at this coming-of-age must be offered to those who have supported the review, have paid their subscriptions regularly, have bought it, read it and appreciated it, those whose number we hope will increase enough to allow BLACKFRIARS in its 'maturity' to be mature in bulk as well as in quality.

These twenty-one years, spent mostly in the fitful peace between two wars, have not been years of untrammelled peace for BLACKFRIARS. Indeed, a review that set out 'as its aim and endeavour to state and defend truth . . . to tell relevant truths and insist on those truths that are either unknown or neglected or in danger of being forgotten' (the first Editorial) must expect to stir up a hornet's nest here and there. To attempt to apply St. Thomas's principles on usury to modern conditions, to consider the Catholic press in the light of truth and culture, to refer to the baroque quarrels between Dominicans and Jesuits—the feet of the preachers of such truths inevitably stirred up an angry buzz in complacent nests. There came a time when some even judged that those feet had gone so far astray as to have wandered into a Red Hell. Dominicans have so often stood for Revolution that it was not surprising that some saw red when they looked at the black and white cover. But what is the revolution we demand? Not that which our critics had suspected; heaven be praised, they were colour-blind. The only revolution that a Dominican review may ever stand for is the white revolution of grace, and for that it must always stand indomitably defending the truth. Dominicans are accused of arrogance and dogmatism, and it is not always easy to draw the line between the claims of established truth and personal opinion. But BLACKFRIARS has always at least aimed at the impartiality and sympathy that spring from a charity inspiring the knowledge of truth.

In the course of these twenty-one years this review has more than once expressed its admiration for the French Dominican periodicals published at Juvisy, *La Vie Spiri-*

tuelle and *La Vie Intellectuelle*. It has, in fact, aimed at producing for English readers a combination of the two. This may smack of bumptious ambition in a review considerably smaller than either in size and without the public that those journals commanded in France. But the heart of this ambition is simply to give to English readers interested in Christian ideals guiding principles that are derived from the teaching of the Church and from the philosophy and theology of St. Thomas. *La Vie Intellectuelle* stood for the external activities of a fully Christian life in the world of to-day, in art and letters, in society and politics. Christian life related to present culture and civilisation represents one of the objects of BLACKFRIARS. The field is vast, but it can be focussed in the lenses of Christian and Thomist principles. In order, however, to live this Christian life in every human sphere with energy and contagious enthusiasm it is necessary to strengthen the spirit within. It is the regeneration and revolution of the spirit that Mr. Christopher Dawson has called for with so clear a voice as the leader of the Sword of the Spirit Movement, and for French people *La Vie Spirituelle* used to offer directives and encouragement for such a revolution. We would wish, therefore, in the same way to help people to live the interior life of a Christian, to teach them how to pray and meditate, to judge spiritual experiences—in a word, to teach them how to live in closer conformity with Christ.

In theory at least, therefore, the scope of BLACKFRIARS is limited within the confines of these aspects of the Christian life. And this is necessary to prevent a needless waste of energy in covering the ground already well worked by other periodicals. In the past we may not always have fulfilled these ideals, but in realising our shortcomings we may thank God that we can see the enormous work that lies ahead in the increasing chaos of the times.

To fulfil these high ideals we need the increased support of readers. Already in the first months of this year many new readers have appeared to fill the gaps made by the enforced withdrawal of our continental supporters, but even so, and despite the compression of our type to give more lines to the page, we are still forced to remain little

more than two-thirds of our pre-war size, and our reviewing space remains sadly diminished, with the result that reviews are often late. This, however, we hope to remedy in the course of the year as support of our efforts increases. And at the same time, with the encouragement of the good will of our readers, we hope to approach closer to the ideals which BLACKFRIARS has always visualised and which now in its maturity it has greater opportunities of achieving.

We may conclude by quoting some words of the first circular sent out a few weeks before BLACKFRIARS was born in April, 1920. These words show that the original task remains the same though now of wider range and greater urgency.

During the last five years the world has been shaken out of its old grooves and has to face the problem of shaping its destinies according to the changed circumstances wrought by the greatest of wars. Many are groping after new principles and new standards to help them to re-construct a shattered world. Others, who believe that new principles and new standards are not needed, but rather a wise application of the old principles and the old standards, are turning to the Church, the oldest depository of truth, to hear her answer to the problems of the age. It is considered opportune then to start a paper whose object and endeavour shall be to give the Church's view on current affairs and the questions of the hour.