

CORRESPONDENCE

A NEW CATHOLIC PAPER.

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS.

SIR,—May I try to enlist your sympathy in a project I have in mind, namely, the founding of a new Catholic periodical? I apply to you, Sir, for advice since I have watched the career of BLACKFRIARS with interest from the beginning and I have been impressed by your impartiality. I remember, too, all you did to secure in England an appreciation of the horrors of the rule of the Black-and-Tans in Ireland; I remember, too, how you have explained the Holy See's condemnation of the *Action Française* with a fullness and an intellectual balance of judgement which have wholly convinced me and which I looked for in vain elsewhere. Nor can I forget the masterly articles you have had on the Anglican question, always charitable and yet direct in a way, and certainly written in a tone and manner which I have to admit are not always conspicuous in Catholic periodicals; and the remarkable series on Christian economics which was fearless, valuable and true. Moreover, I have noted a fact that may have escaped the notice of many other people, namely, that very many of your articles have appeared in book-form as collected essays or as more detailed studies of the point at issue: and surely this is some indication of the permanent value of some at least of your contributions.

What have I in mind in my proposal to found a Catholic periodical? Sir, I would like to attack the Catholic Press; and I mean the whole Catholic Press, not excluding BLACKFRIARS, for mark you, Sir, I would wish—perhaps not least—to criticise you yourself.

Perhaps you will wonder why I should have this itch for attacking. I will explain it to you. I have a passion for irony, 'little sister to restraint,' or rather not so much irony, for I think I lack the exquisite subtlety of intellect needed for irony; but I want not only to make a hit, but to hit out very hard and very often at Catholic journalism which I positively loathe. You may suggest that I need not buy what I do not like and so may save my soul from irritation less expensively than by founding a journal for the purpose of mere criticism. But I am in this unhappy position that my trade compels me to see Catholic

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periodicals lying about in my office; and I happen to be of that type of mind that must seek out what annoys it.

Probably I suffer from some 'complex,' but I have not been able to discover what name to give it. Do you think it may be the *complex Inge*, about which you published an article some months ago? Perhaps you would be so good as to put me in touch with the writer of the article, for he would surely know from what I suffer.

If I see my purpose quite clearly, I intend to be merely critical, not in the creative but in the purely negative sense of that word, first because that is my temper of mind, secondly because it will lay me less open to attack, thirdly because it is more fun, fourthly because it is so easy—any fool can do it—and fifthly because it should *produce a better sale* for the journal. These reasons, you will agree with me, are all in the best tradition of modern journalism. There is, however, one practice of an older journalism that I should like to revive, and that is that the writers for my journal should remain anonymous. May I trouble you to be patient with me while I tell you why? Partly it is because I think that if I remain anonymous, readers of my journal (and I am bound to have readers if I am only critical enough *and* anonymous) may imagine that I am really someone rather important. That is quite a good point, Sir, which I recommend to you since you have unhappily set your face against the practice—I am sure to the prejudice of your sales. I grant that even Swift broke loose from that custom, but we have not all his honesty. Moreover, the weightiest reason for wishing to remain anonymous is that the firm by which I happen to be employed might suffer in the sale of its wares if it were known that my prospective staff sits in its office. I should, or rather we should (for, like the devils in the Gospel, 'we are many') be sure to make enemies amongst Catholic journalists and their enmity might do our trade harm: so again, Sir, I hope you will agree with me that we are acting according to the best tradition of journalism when we desire to remain anonymous. Thus we shall be able to combine popularity in trade with the power of saying with impunity as many unpleasant things as we like about anybody and everybody. Please don't call us dishonest or any such hard name as that. Rather remember our necessities and pity us.

There is just one last point I would like to put to you, and that is as to the name we propose to take. We are thinking of calling ourselves HORS D'ŒUVRES (Hugo, in his excellent handbook on how to learn French in six months, says that this

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should be pronounced ORDERVRE). Do you think this likely to be a good name? We have some good reasons for the choice. Our journal is going to have all the qualities that go to make up that excellent item in the modern meal. We shall hope to be

- (1) Spicy and saucy ;
- (2) Unsubstantial and piquant ;
- (3) Not of any real value, but rather attractive to the very young and the very old who most favour this part of the meal ;
- (4) Most liked by those who have little taste of their own and need to have it provided for them ;
- (5) That part of the meal which the ordinary run of mankind can most easily do without.

Believe me to be, Sir,

Yours most truly,

ANDREW BOYLE.