

EDITORIAL

A NEWSPAPER should give us not merely news, but *the* news. We do not read our newspaper for the mere sake of reading. We read it with the desire of knowing what is going on, and we like the whole truth honestly set forth without gloss or varnish. If we should open our morning paper and immediately turn to the cricket news, because cricket interests us more than the Coal strike, Poland or Ireland, we should be surprised and perhaps annoyed were we to find, in the report of the last match of the season, a glowing account of the deeds of Middlesex with not a word about the doings of the Rest of England.

Yet this, or something very similar, is what we have often found on the more important pages where our paper deals with the larger issues of life. According to the colour or view the journal stands for, it will naturally tend to exaggerate one side and minimize the other.

It would be insane to hope that the complicated issues involved, say in the Coal strike, or, for instance, in the present chaos in Ireland, could be described in the same straightforward simple way one would report a cricket match. One does not expect that in matters where violent human passions play so large a part. But one does look for a serious effort to be impartial. Above all, one does deplore in a journal that professes to give the news any attempt at juggling with facts. We are all familiar with those tricks of manœuvring capital letters, of so manipulating glaring headlines

BLACKFRIARS, Vol. I, No. 7.

Blackfriars

as to make comparatively irrelevant and unimportant facts seem essential.

There are really hopeful signs that these journalistic expedients to hoodwink the public are not being used so much as of old. There seems to be a serious effort on the part of editors to get at all the facts and to give equal prominence to both sides. A noteworthy example was the publication of the Bishop of Cork's letter to *The Times* in which with extraordinary moderation and dignity he set before English readers a point of view that must be to them almost startlingly unfamiliar. Another example was the printing, also in *The Times* (Sept. 14th), of a letter signed by thirteen eminent literary men pleading for the abandonment of the policy of military repression in Ireland as a preliminary condition of an Irish settlement. The letter insists on a very vital point, namely the prevailing ignorance in England of what is actually going on in Ireland. It flatly declares that military discipline has broken down; that "a sort of military lynch law is in force, applied not to the culprits, but to the villages and towns of Ireland." It deplors the fact that "the actual state of government and justice in Ireland has not been scrutinized carefully, and Englishmen hear little of proceedings that are bringing danger and dishonour upon us."

In the same issue of *The Times* appears a long quotation from a paper called *The Irish Bulletin*, in which Sinn Fein makes serious indictments against Dublin Castle. The fact that these things can be published in an English paper shows that journalistic chivalry is not dead. And we are consoled and are

Editorial

more ready to hope that some ray of light may soon appear on our western horizon.

* * * * *

In an old monastic chronicle there is a story of a hermit who made friends with a king. When they both died, the king, it is said, went to Heaven because he hobnobbed with the hermit; and the hermit found himself shut out because he had hobnobbed with the king! Apparently the moral is that an alliance between Church and State is usually more beneficial to the State than to the Church. God's dues and Cæsar's so easily become confused and entangled that it would seem better to have them quite separate and distinct. It is good to isolate the Church lest she become infected by the contagion of the world. The isolation gives to the Church a splendid freedom of action, it almost entirely eliminates those material influences which should never sway a purely spiritual authority; but at the same time the State is deprived of a spiritualizing force and given a liberty that easily degenerates into licence. Hence the modern State tends more and more to become an absolutely non-moral institution. But because it has to deal with the complex ways and waywardnesses of men, it is often faced with the problem of treating moral ills with non-moral remedies. It is rather like trying to cleanse the soul by sending it to the laundry or asking a cobbler to mend a broken heart.

The crude divorce legislation, the Ministry of Health and Prohibition are all the natural fruits of this effort of an essentially materialistic and non-moral

Blackfriars

authority to cope with evils that primarily concern the will of man. Because it cannot admit a spiritual principle in man the State is constantly invading the sanctities of life and tampering with sacred things over which it has no authority.

The recent report of the Ministry of Health might be read as a parable to illustrate the truth that we do not gather grapes from the thistle. The Report speaks gloomily of the results of the Health Ministry's efforts to check those diseases that seem to be more immediately the wages of sin. Alas, men cannot be made virtuous by Act of Parliament. It is not human remedies, prophylactics, eugenics or material preventives that we want, but the moral preventive contained in the *Thou shalt not* of the Decalogue.

* * * * *

The Article on *The Reunion of the Churches* in the present number is a translation of a paper which Père Lagrange wrote specially for BLACKFRIARS.

THE EDITOR.

