

Blackfriars

POSTSCRIPT.

Translation of a sub-leader in the Radical paper, *Politiken*, August 23rd, 1932.

THE HOUR-GLASS.

Vilhelm Rasmussen¹ is right in saying that it is doubtful which creates new truths. Something is continually happening which compels us to revise our ideas. May not, for instance, the splendid procession of Catholics, and all that display of the power of the Catholic Church on Danish soil, and above all the large number of remarkable and distinguished figures of (foreign) prelates have produced some Pavlovian² reflexes in the brains of orthodox Protestants? At the present time it is natural, even for a layman, to use terms borrowed from psychologists, also when speaking of the Eucharistic Congress which was concluded yesterday. The magnificence of the Catholic Church, the crimson and purple of the Cardinals and Bishops, the gold-embroidered Mass vestments, the baldachino, all that festivity with which Catholics know so well how to surround their divine worship, has produced in us, at first a reflex which made us open our eyes in wonder, next a conditioned reflex, and here it is that doubt sets in.

Did we not learn at school that the Reformation had quite put an end to Catholicism? We read about the luxurious lives of the monks, about the orgies of profligate popes, about all that Augean stable which Luther cleaned out for ever, for ever abolishing belief in saints and indulgences. Hans Tavsén was a hero and Christian III was the defender of the true faith. History has gradually been pulling these dogmas to pieces. We understood that King Christian acted as little from ideal motives as did the German princes. Calculation had a hand in it when he confiscated the estates of the Church. We learned to look more kindly at the monks and priests who preserved the culture of the West during the Middle Ages. The iconoclasts were regarded as worthy of blame even by the Lutheran clergy, who are now trying, as far as they are able, to save what is left of fresco paintings and wood-carvings of the great ages of

¹ Vilhelm Rasmussen—Danish author of the present day—free-thinker.

² Professor Pavlov—one of the speakers at the Congress of Psychologists, held at the same time as the Eucharistic Congress.

The Catholic Church in Denmark

the Church. The much maligned popes of the Renaissance have turned out to be refined and erudite connoisseurs of the art of antiquity and the protectors of art and science. Even the notorious Lucrezia Borgia appears, according to the latest researches, in almost angelic purity as a refined, gentle and highly cultivated woman, shamefully slandered.

Now when the Catholic Church in the height of a Danish summer displays all her magnificent splendour and sends us some of her most stately and gifted men, we understand quite spontaneously that Catholicism is not a mere curiosity to be encountered by tourists on a summer holiday, but a living reality, and perhaps the greatest spiritual power of the time. A great deal has been said about a revision of our school books. False ideas about our neighbours, incorrect accounts of victories, one-sided accounts of the conditions that led to defeat, everything that is only calculated to nourish Chauvinism and keep us enmeshed in error must be taken out of them. It is undoubtedly time, too, that we got rid of the error that Protestantism has for ever put an end to the Catholic Church. Through doubt of what we learned as children we have arrived, whether we like it or not, at the belief that the Pope still represents a spiritual power to which millions of people render submission. One may become a student in this country without knowing any better than that Luther conquered the Pope and laid Catholicism in ruins. When we set to work writing the new text-books in history for schoolchildren we must remember also to revise the chapter on the Reformation.

(I.L.)