

BLACKFRIARS

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

THE CLERGY REVIEW is perhaps rather unfortunately so called. While it caters specifically for the needs of priests it is often packed with matter of wider interest, and it would be a pity if the laity were to neglect it in the belief that it was exclusively a professional organ of the clergy. The November number is a notable instance. *Leo XIII as Sociologist* by Fr. Lewis Watt, S.J., is of unusual interest as describing the remarkable personality who established the Catholic Social Movement, the experiences which drew his attention to the subject before his election, his achievements for 'the people' when he became Pope. Fr. Conrad Pepler, O.P., writes a splendid article on *Human Unity*, contrasting the actual disintegration of mankind with the Communist and Catholic ideals for reintegration. The specifically Catholic ideal is that of union in Christ with God, to be brought about through the Mass and in the spirit of its sacrifice. Hence the real significance of liturgical revival is neither archaeological, ritualistic nor even devotional, but lies in the realization that the liturgy is the God-given response to a vital human and social need which was never so urgent as at the present time. Fr. F. H. Drinkwater, in the course of a summary on *The Progress of Money Reform*, writes of the inadequacy of the usual Catholic approach to the subject with its assurance that interest-taking is compatible with mediaeval teaching on usury. Fr. Ronald Knox in *Capitalized Devotions* criticises the absurdities and inconsistencies of 'Catholic printing,' especially in the use of capital letters. The matter is no fad because:

Catholic literature is not meant exclusively for pious Christians. Its aims should be to make itself readable to the careless, the worldly, if possible. Why, then, distress these profane eyes with an oleaginous over-emphasis of piety? The harm, to be sure, is done subconsciously for the most part, but it is done nevertheless. There is an unfamiliarity about the very look of the page, in any book recommended as spiritual reading, which hardens the layman's resolution to put it down the moment your back is turned.

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Inevitably some printer's devil makes havoc of the very next article by decapitating a footnote and putting the body in the middle of the text. But with a little patience it is easy to reconstruct Dr. E. C. Messenger's essay in which he extends his studies of the Lutheran origin of the Anglican Ordinal to an examination of the sources of the Communion Service.

CONGREGATIONAL MASS. At last there is an English magazine to encourage liturgical piety and spirit. *MAGNIFICAT* (6d. from 207 Heathfield Road, Birmingham, 19) is the organ of the 'Society of the Magnificat,' but ought to be known by many who do not feel called to undertake the admirable, but rather unusual, obligations of membership of the Society. It would be easy to criticize a certain lack of proportion in the infant society and magazine, but that is only to be expected of infants. Most interesting is the account by 'A Parish Priest' of his *Liturgical Parish* in the latest number of the magazine—the first to appear in print instead of typescript. His is one of the very few parishes in the country where the people join in the saying of Low Mass:

On week-days [why only week-days?] the low Mass is recited by all present, that is to say we have, by episcopal permission, the *Missa Recitata*. This revival of the ancient way of uniting priest and people is wholly admirable. What utility it gives to the 'Orate Fratres,' to each 'Dominus vobiscum'! Those of us who have felt with Peter Favre the piteous silence of the laity rejoice indeed to hear this silence broken by the priestly laity uttering aloud the sacred words of this sacrifice.

It is a matter for wonderment that, whereas this practice is becoming increasingly common on the Continent and in America, it is still practically unknown in England, where the masses of the people find unintelligible a public worship in which the congregation take no active part. Here is a liturgical revival which is within the potentialities of the humblest parish church or chapel and which is in no danger of degenerating into archaeologism, ritualism or aestheticism. Neither does it seem open, in England, to the possibilities of abuse and confusion which might follow upon its too hasty introduction to the less disciplined congregations of some Latin or missionary countries.

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ARMS AND THE POPES. Seldom have such cynical documents appeared in print as the reports in *TIME AND TIDE* of the American official commission of inquiry into the armament racket. They should effectively destroy any complacency which Englishmen may feel regarding their own country's part in the matter. Mr. Norman Angell's campaign in the same paper deserves, we think, the fullest support. But those who regard vast rearmament as an inevitable necessity need to be warned against making a virtue of it. The Church's teaching on the armament question is plain and explicit, and we can hardly be accused of lack of topicality if we quote Leo XIII:

Large armies and unlimited increase of armaments may be able to check for a while the danger of hostile efforts, but they can never procure a sure and lasting peace. On the contrary, the increase of armed forces is calculated rather to excite than to diminish rivalry and suspicion. It upsets the morale of the people who live in a constant state of fear, and the costs which are involved weigh so heavily upon them that one wonders whether war itself would not be less intolerable.

The strong condemnation of conscription by Leo XIII and Benedict XV should also be recalled, and more especially the latter's uncompromising principle that 'There should be a just agreement between all nations for the simultaneous and reciprocal reduction of armaments . . . to the level which is necessary and sufficient for the maintenance of public order *within* each state.' The day is past when such a policy was immediately practicable, but the principle holds good. Much confusion of thought arises from the fact that the campaign against rearmament and for the nationalization or internationalization of the manufacture of arms is often regarded solely as a measure to prevent war and is not seldom equated with pacifism. It will be seen that it is the disastrous economic and internal effects of arms and conscription, no less than international disorder, that the Popes have in mind in their pronouncements. The armament racket is a menace, less because modern arms make *wars*, than because they conduce to national poverty and degradation and finally to international *massacre*.

FURTHER FERMENT IN FILMLAND. The firstfruits of the Hollywood clean-up are beginning to appear on West-End

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screens, and the critics are not amused. The old mentality and even the old themes are there, but the spice which alone had made them palatable has gone. To judge from the reports from U.S.A., Hollywood's imagination has found no substitute for sensualism than sentimentalism, and instead of gangsters and tough guys the screen is to ooze the inhuman synthetic goodness of *Little Men*. In short, if something *positive* is not done—and soon—the last state of the screen is likely to be worse than the first. The trouble lies, as Miss Miriam R. Flaherty says in *Sentimentality and the Screen* in THE COMMONWEAL (October 5th), in the fact 'that cinema as an art seems to be continually ignored by both Hollywood and the Legion of Decency in the controversy which now rages between them.' For the moment, victory is with the Legion:

The Legion to a certain extent will be dictator, and the motion-picture output for the next few years will be under the supervision of its critical eye. Will this organization meet Hollywood on common grounds and concern itself only with moral interests as Hollywood has been concerned with money interests? Now that these men have power, will they neglect to further an embryonic art that has had a difficult birth and a stunted growth? Will they witness the production of such sentimentalities as *Little Men*, *Lavender and Old Lace*, *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* and hundreds like them, condoning their worthlessness because of their cleanliness? If they do, they will fail a tradition long associated with the Church . . .

Catholics are, in fact, especially in U.S.A., in the position in which they can either make or mar the screen, gain or antagonize the public opinion of the world. Miss Flaherty's own programme is perhaps a little too concerned with 'uplift' and with strictly documentary films to be immediately helpful in matters of detail. But her statement of the principles which should govern further action is admirable and deserves to be read and pondered upon, especially in this country where the film-going public is particularly unlikely to tolerate the sentimentalisms now under production.

We take this opportunity of congratulating the COMMONWEAL on the attainment of its tenth birthday in its issue of November 2nd.

PENGUIN.