

EDITORIAL NOTES

Friars Black and Grey

BLACKFRIARS in this December number devotes its pages to St. Francis, whose memory the world has been cherishing in a special way during the present year, exactly seven centuries since his death. The Church by solemn proclamation and festive reminder has declared Francis to be the 'Alter Christus,' the perfectly Christ-like man. Italy has made him a national hero and non-Catholics have sounded his praises. Among all the centenaries, whether religious or secular, that the last few years have produced, none has been more universally popular than this. It is strange that a man should win applause by running away from it and achieve popularity by seeking the next world rather than this. It makes one inclined to think better of our world and age when we find so many unexpected people on their knees before St. Francis: we know not what to do with those convenient labels, 'materialism,' 'commercialism,' and 'unchecked greed,' when we see the world running after Holy Poverty. Some of the worshippers are perhaps in love with the right thing for the wrong reason. The preacher to the birds is remembered more readily than the Francis who strove to overcome with his eloquence the stubborn hearts of men: the wolf of Gubbio is more romantic than the wolf nearer home—the man who is wolf to his fellow man; and Franciscan simplicity is a sterner thing than 'the simple life.' Yet whatever brings men to the feet of St. Francis cannot but have some element of good in it; and can we not leave Francis to deal with those who seek him?

'Courtesy is the sister of Charity,' said St. Francis: and this number of BLACKFRIARS is a gift of courtesy

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offered to Francis. The friendship between Francis and Dominic, immortalised by the art of Della Robbia, has been handed on as a legacy to the two Orders of Friars, and we know that any gift of homage made by the Friars of Dominic to Francis becomes at once an act of fidelity to their own Father as well.

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We are indebted to Father Cuthbert, O.S.F.C., for the information that the poem, 'In fuoco l'amor mi mise,' of which Father John Gray gives us an elegant translation in this number of **BLACKFRIARS**, is probably the work of Jacopone da Todi. St. Bernardine of Siena attributed it to St. Francis; and it probably came from St. Francis in this sense that the Saint composed it in the crude, rugged style of 'The Canticle of the Sun'; and this rough original was later worked up into more polished literary form by Jacopone. But all will agree that the song bears a Franciscan signature and breathes the spirit of God's Troubadour.

John Swinnerton Phillimore

Our readers will have learned with regret of the death on Tuesday, November 16th, at Shedfield, in Hampshire, of Professor John Swinnerton Phillimore. The public references to Professor Phillimore have been unanimous in paying the highest tributes to his character and learning. His rare achievements as a young man at Oxford, where he carried off the Chancellor's Prize for Latin verse, the Hertford, Craven and Ireland Scholarships, were but the prelude to a brilliant career first as Lecturer at Oxford and afterwards as Professor at Glasgow. Had he lived only a few weeks longer, he would have been elected to an Honorary Studentship at Christ Church—an honour the House pays only to her most distinguished sons. But if he shone in the academies it was with a light-

house brilliance towering above his surroundings. He did not yield in any way to the narrowing influence, always a possible danger in university circles, where the learned are sometimes self-consciously learned. No one was less donnish than he. There was nothing of conceited pedantry about him nor any of the intellectual pride that sometimes goes with culture and scholarship. He was a scholar and a poet who out-matched scholars and poets of renown; yet his interests were as wide as life and his sympathies went out to forlorn hopes and lost causes and the oppressed everywhere. He was no learned recluse unmindful of the evils of his time. Any campaign for social and religious justice and any crusade against political corruption would find in him an ardent supporter. Blessed Thomas More seems to have been his patron. His firm faith, deep learning, practical wisdom and political insight would seem to show that he fashioned himself successfully upon so great a model. Professor Phillimore was occasionally a contributor to and always a friend of *BLACKFRIARS*. The very last of his literary labours was the exquisitely wrought poem, 'Per Ignem,' which appeared in these pages in November. It is probably the most finished piece which he, who was no mean poet, has produced. Its finely-devised form, its vigorous utterance, its strong Christian theme, its fervid faith—all provide an unconscious commentary in miniature upon the true character of the man.