

Editorial

If anyone besides the editor reads the reviews in this journal month by month, he will have noticed certain recurring complaints about the standard of the books put out by Catholic publishers. The first is the matter of shoddy translation. Since we in this country have to rely so much on European Catholic scholarship, it would seem that the least we could do would be to ensure that it was put into English in a way worthy of the original, as happens generally speaking with non-Catholic theological and scriptural writing. All too often our own books are filled with stilted expressions that hardly disguise their foreign source; often, too, mistranslation distorts their meaning. Then again it is becoming common practice to put out even major works, to which constant reference will be made, either without any index, or at most with an inadequate list of scripture references and authors quoted. The fact that this is continental practice is no excuse for relaxing our own standards when producing translations. Finally, although English books in general are still cheap by comparison with those of other countries (except, it is said, Russia), our Catholic books are often noticeably more expensive than comparable non-Catholic ones.

Yet while these protests need to be made, we must have the greatest sympathy for the problems which Catholic publishers face. The main one is, of course, lack of authors. While our people remain theologically illiterate, relative to their standard of education in secular matters, it is not easy to see the remedy for this. Without books of sufficiently high standard, written with our own needs in view, can we ever hope to see a Catholic community with a living interest in the intellectual expression of its faith, actively discussing and writing about it? In the meantime we can support our publishers by buying and reading those books (there are many of them) which allow us to share the results of the the theological, scriptural, and liturgical revival that is going on in the modern Church, while keeping open a sharply critical eye for those failings which it is in a publisher's power to put right.