

# BLACKFRIARS

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## EDITORIAL

FATHER BEDE JARRETT AND AMERICA would probably appear to most of those who knew him as a natural juxtaposition. Yet it ought perhaps to be rather surprising, for he was so completely and even so typically English. The truth is, of course, that though he was English he was not insular, and he escaped the narrowness of insularity because he was also so typically Dominican. (We call him typical not in the sense that he was like many others cast in the same mould, but in the sense that he was himself a model from which a true mould might well be fashioned.) He was thus typically Dominican not merely in his apostolic spirit, but also in his discernment and appreciation of truth and true values. It is this, more than anything else, that explains his interest, and perhaps his success, in the United States. He, who loved youth for its fineness, its enthusiasms, its unaffected (even if sometimes quixotic or unformed) idealism, and all its possibilities of greatness as yet unspoiled nor disillusioned, saw and appreciated these qualities of youth in the American nation. He was big enough, too, not to expect perfection but to overlook the failings which were the outcome of unbounded energy and activity, and not of malice. And if he found there a more eager response than in England, it was because we have perchance grown old and sluggish. He did not cease to love what was old and set, but he saw greater hope for the

future in what was young and still plastic. He found this in America; but he found, too, the signs of a fruitful maturity, evidences of a true scholarship, of new-born literature and art, and above all a vigorous and sincere Catholic life. It is still the purblind fashion of many of us to think of Americans in terms of gangsters, racketeers, and go-getters, or of superficiality, hustle, and graft. Perhaps we are not helped in this matter by the American movies or tourists that do not always show us the true American. In any case, it is high time we should remove the beam out of our own eye and stand prepared, as Father Bede was, to find in the United States a new Saul amongst the prophets, a source of rejuvenation for the hardening arteries of Western life and culture, a 'New Deal' for civilization at large.

Already a year has passed since death ended his unflagging apostolate, and we feel that his anniversary is fittingly commemorated (together with that of his fellow labourer, Father Alfred Barry, O.S.F.C.) in the first article of our present issue. This powerful eulogium of their work and of their success in America comes from the authoritative pen of yet another English priest, well known to the people of New York and its environs for a decade of years, who appreciates, as they did, the potential greatness of the American people. At the same time we must not seem, even, to belittle either Father Bede's apostolate in England or the love and veneration in which he was, and is still, held by his fellow-countrymen. He believed in them equally, though for different reasons, and foresaw that Great Britain might well become, with Ireland, the last stronghold of the faith in Europe because of the fundamental religiousness and tenacious honesty of its people. It was not that he despaired of Europe, but he could not close his eyes to the inroads of atheism, communism, and frank materialism, malignant growths which seem to flourish more easily abroad than amongst our own people. He saw the vital need of international peace, and wrote and spoke much for its advancement, but he knew only too well that there could be no peace in a Europe that was not Christian. Father Bede is dead already a year, but his memory will live as that of a great priest magnanimous enough to appreciate the Old World and the New.

**EDITOR.**