FOR JACQUES MARITAIN.

Last November Jacques Maritain celebrated his sixtieth birthday. In the United States and in Canada, also—I do not doubt—in France, a great many other people celebrated it with him and for him. In England, too, there are many who would not wish this moment and this man to go unremembered.

I do not speak here of the philosopher ; that is not my province. In America a volume of tributary essays is presently to appear, and these will tell a little of his fame. I would rather say something of the man, because it is the man who ultimately matters. It is not alone, it is not even chiefly, Maritain's mind which has affected our generation. It is the force of his character, the strength of his example, the radiance of his spirit. These survive the acrimony of the arena and the argument of the Schools.

My thoughts go back to a Saturday in March, 1940. I was then lecturing at the University of Notre Dame, and I motored in to Chicago that afternoon, with Waldeman Gurian and Yves Simon, to meet Maritain for the first time. Earlier that summer I had just missed him in Paris, and it seemed odd that I should have to come to the Middle West to find him now. We met at a mutual friend's, John Nef, whose magnificent book, 'The United States and Civilisation,' has just been published over here by the Cambridge University Press. Madame Maritain was also there, and her sister, Mlle. Oumansoff. Round us, on the walls, were pictures by Dérain, de Segonzac, and Rouault. Before us, on that hospitable table, was Richebourg, 1929. All this spoke to us of France, and everyone present spoke, or tried to speak, in French.

It was a good evening. We talked of the war. Maritain had made his point of view quite clear in two articles published in *The Commonweal*. He held, quite simply, that by their action in declaring war on Germany Great Britain and France had saved the soul of Europe. He did not say that this was a Holy War ; he said that it was a war in defence of civilisation. I do not think that anything which has happened since has caused him to alter, or to modify that view. It was not, however, a view generally acceptable to American Catholics. How, they asked, could a man who had refused to underwrite General Franco's commission as a Crusader expect them to follow the standard of the British Empire and the

Third Republic? After all, they would agree, Maritain was a Frenchman, and if you scratched a Frenchman you found a Chauvinist.

Certainly, that evening in Chicago, no one would have doubted that Maritain was a Frenchman. After dinner we played what I suppose you would call 'highbrow' parlour games. What were the ten greatest books in the world? Who were the ten greatest authors? Which had influenced us, respectively, the most? There was fairly general agreement about Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, Dante, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Shakespeare, and St. John of the Cross. The Maritains put in their personal pleas for Léon Bloy and Père Surin. There was some controversy about Dionysius of 'The Divine Names.' There was some rivalry between Racine and Molière. I rather brazenly proposed Rabelais. Dostoievsky was a runner-up. All this discussion was carried on with a typical French intensity; one felt that the intellect was alight.

Earlier on, Maritain had spoken of France and England, and of his hopes that the Entente was now cemented by the comradeship of arms. He had been, that summer, to England; he had lectured at Blackfriars. I learned afterwards something of his fears on arrival in what was still, in 1939, a fairly cosy country. Would these people fight, he had asked? But a few days gave him the answer. He returned to France reassured.

Two months passed and Maritain watched from New York the disaster of his country. I did not see him again until the September of that year, when I found myself once more on the East Coast. He had just moved into a small apartment on Fifth Avenue; I was living opposite at the Brevoort. I saw him often, and found him quite unchanged. There was the same simplicity, the same gentleness, the same 'bon humeur.' The house at Meudon, where men had gone to visit him year after year in search of truth and consolation—the house where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved—had been visited by Herr Himmler's agents. His papers had been ransacked. After all, Maritain was a Christian, and might he not have succoured a Spanish or a German refugee? But, in a hundred immaterial ways, the house at Meudon had escaped Herr Himmler's agents. The house at Meudon was on Fifth Avenue. Here the Maritains—Jacques, Raissa, and Vera—pursued the old busy, yet tranquil, routine. Here, on Sundays, one met the same kind of people, drawn by an instinctive sympathy. Here were Jean C. de Menasce, newly come from Rome, and Père Couturier (whose win-

dows in Notre Dame had provided Paris with an aesthetic controversy just before the war), and Père Ducatillon—both these latter were of the Order of Preachers. There was the same good talk and generous hospitality.

And there was the same unending charity. A friend wanted to get out of France . . . affidavits had to be signed . . . funds had to be procured. And amid all this mass of practical detail, Maritain was writing his commentary on St. Paul, his ' A Travers le désastre,' and mastering enough English to lecture at Princeton and Columbia Universities. One did indeed feel that the collapse of France was no more than an incident, however tragic, in a crisis as yet unresolved. One felt that the body had fallen, but that the mind and the spirit lived on, and that a day might come, sooner than we knew, when they would renew the soiled and bleeding face of the West. France was living, in her proper person, here and now, in Fifth Avenue. She was living with Yves Simon and his beautiful family at Notre Dame ; with Stanislas Fumet at Lyons ; with Mauriac at Bordeaux. This death was only the prelude to rebirth. No one could meet and speak with Maritain during those dreadful days, and doubt that France would persist ; that France was immortal.

One week-end in October, 1940, a retreat was held for the French then in New York and for their friends. Père Couturier conducted it, and Maritain himself spoke on Contemplation. It came over me then, in a rush of gratitude, what we all owe to this man. When I considered his natural immersion in the problems of art and philosophy and mysticism, I wondered the more at the courage with which he has stepped into the sordid arena. Small thanks he has had from those who, a few years back, were claiming him as a prophet of ' order,' and licking their chops over his attacks on Luther and Rousseau ! It is the old trouble of the one, who is too wise for the many. People say that he has moved to the Left. This charge does scant justice to his consistency. Is it not rather that some of us, in our loyalty to prejudice and our fear of truth, had moved a little further to the Right ? Is it not false to the point of blasphemy, to confuse the delicate balance of freedom and control which compose Maritain's philosophy of ' order ' with the Fascist façade of ' hierarchy '? The truth is that Maritain provides both a confirmation and a correction for one's ideals. If one's bent is conservative, one cannot complain of a system of thought based on Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. If one's bent is radical, one cannot complain of a humanism which looks so boldly to the future,

and acknowledges that with us here in the present the social implications of the Gospel have not even begun to be realised. But the conservative sees pretty soon that Maritain hankers after no régime but the Kingdom of God ; and the radical realises, equally clearly, that he is quite untouched by the romanticism which discolours the revolutionary, the Utopian, mirage.

It is not only in politics—it is also in art—that Maritain has made vital contact with the currents of contemporary thought. No one has done so much to lay the foundations of a Christian aesthetic, in which any artist who pursues the truth of his métier may nevertheless find a place. But his influence, as I have said, has a wider range than the intellect. It proceeds from charity. I have moved too much among men active in the controversies and sharing the anxiety of our time, not to know what this influence has meant to them. If there are sincere searchers after truth who believe that Catholicism is something, after all, other than a fantasy of reaction, a *nostalgie du temps perdu,* it is because they have, in many cases, made contact with the mind and the heart of Maritain. He has many friends and admirers in this country ; some are within, and some are without, the household of the Faith. But I believe I speak for them all when I wish him many happy returns of his birthday.

ROBERT SPEAIGHT

(January 25th, 1943).

A NEW EDITION OF PASCAL[1]

PASCAL, to use a customary word of his own, is admirable. It is true that the satire of the *Provinciales*, however clever and amusing in its time, is out-of-date and unjust; that his scientific experiments and writings belong to the domain of the history of science. But his apology for Christianity, even in the fragmentary form of the famous *Pensées,* is an imperishable work. Into it he put all his knowledge and experience of the world, of human achievement, and of the divine things that were the absorbing pursuit of his mature life.

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[1] *Pascal's Apology for Religion,* by H. F. Stewart (Cambridge University Press, 8s. 6d.).