

EDITORIAL

AN Editor is one of the few autocrats that survive in what is reputed a democratic age. He has plenary powers of exclusion and censorship. The words, *Here cut, here burn, here never spare* might well be his motto. The terrible sentence, "The Editor's decision is final," sounds like the pronouncement of an inevitable doom, a death sentence without hope of reprieve. The editor shares with the preacher a certain immunity from attack. It was a barrister who envied the preacher because he pleaded a supreme cause—to a friendly jury—and without fear of reply. Now an editor cannot be envied quite in that way. True enough, like the preacher, he acts pontifically and makes *ex cathedra* utterances ; but it is not always before a friendly jury and it cannot always be said that there is no reply. Indeed, he is treated to every kind of reply, retort and rejoinder. There is a nemesis in the fact that an editor, whose prime function is to edit—that is, to approve or disapprove, to amend, cut and meddle with the writings of others—should himself be the object of the most outspoken approval and disapproval, the latter often expressed without any sense of either restraint or humour.

Every day the postman brings new surprises, usually from persons quite unknown to us. The following is part of a letter that recently reached us from Scotland :

" You will kindly strike my name off the list of subscribers to BLACKFRIARS. To my mind it has proved itself of little literary worth and of far less practical worth. It started out to champion truth and justice. It is edited not far from the biggest factory of lies and injustice in the world, and so far it has been able only to muster sufficient courage to offer a few timid words of protest. Shades of St.

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Thomas ! Its silence on Irish matters may appeal to English Catholics. To me it is decidedly distasteful. Consequently I wish you to erase my name."

With this letter came several others from English Catholics. One commended BLACKFRIARS for its courage and said :

" It is something to find a Catholic magazine which is not afraid to tell the truth about Ireland."

Another regretted that he could not renew his subscription, and implied as kindly and as courteously as possible that he objected to the articles on Ireland. Yet another informed us that he was so enraged by one of the articles on Ireland that he tore his copy of BLACKFRIARS into a thousand pieces. (We feel glad that he did this *after* he had read the review.)

We quote these examples to explain the mental confusion we sometimes suffer from after reading only one morning's correspondence. Surely it is a phenomenon that an Irishman should find our silence on Irish matters decidedly distasteful and that two Englishmen should be, the one angry and the other pleased, because we are *not* silent on Irish matters.

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Another correspondent writes :

" I read BLACKFRIARS carefully from cover to cover, and I sincerely hope you will believe it is not with any intention of being impertinent that I say I like it less every time. I suppose I am right in believing that the aim of BLACKFRIARS is to bring modern movements in art, literature, poetry and politics into line with Catholicism. Please pardon me if I say that I have a very strong conviction that

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modern movements are making the attempt (which was going on before the existence of BLACKFRIARS) to bring Catholicism into line with themselves.”

After marvelling at the heroic patience of one who likes the review less at every reading and yet perseveres in reading it carefully from cover to cover, we may ask why so careful a reader has not supported her general statement with particular examples and quotations of what exactly she means. If she has any fears about the Catholic Church being brought into line with anything false or wrong, we would remind her that Christ's Church is divinely endowed with immunity from error. No one need fear that BLACKFRIARS (even if it ever wished to do so) would ever succeed in doing what Christ has promised that Hell itself shall never do ! Yet we are asked to believe that there is no intention of impertinence when we are accused of the disloyal attempt to tamper with the sources of orthodoxy and truth. The tragedy of this most severe criticism is that it is made in the interests of truth !

The aim of BLACKFRIARS is not to be “modern” or “intellectual” or “superior” ; but just to try and tell the truth, in the hope that if it tries hard enough and long enough it may occasionally succeed.

St. Thomas says : “ When the truth is declared there is no obligation to accept it, and each one is free to receive it or not as he wishes,” still less, we may add, is there any obligation to pay a shilling a month for it.

THE EDITOR.