

## EDITORIAL

THE main part of the present issue is written by laymen. That laymen should write in these pages is not unusual; indeed, scarcely an issue has appeared without at least one article by a layman. This is as it should be, for the Review was originally intended for the laity, and their welfare has always been its primary concern. The review would be lacking in effectiveness if the only contributors were official theologians; for there are many problems which the layman has to try to solve which do not lie within the experience of the trained theologian. Moreover, the theologian so often speaks a language, clear and intelligible to those who have enjoyed a similar training, but which remains jargon to the uninitiated. Often the layman, perhaps more experienced in the art of letters, can express truths pertinent to the spiritual life in a simpler and more intelligible fashion. And in a journal of this nature he receives the safeguard of an expert theologian to 'vet' his work before it appears in print. What is most desirable for *THE LIFE* if it is to be of value to its readers, is that the trained theologian should combine with the interested layman in the production of the Review. It would be short-sighted, to say the least, to confine the contributions to the work of laymen; the expert will always have something that the layman lacks, and it is his duty to instruct, guide and lead those who have not had the advantage of the learning he enjoys.

But we must avoid any danger of seeming to ignore the Holy Father's recent warnings about the lay theologian. The lay writer who contributes to these pages has, as we have said, the negative support of theologians in so far as nothing contrary to faith or morals would be allowed to appear; and, more than that, work that is judged by the expert to be doubtful and liable to lead the unwary astray is equally barred from appearing here in print. The lay theologian of whom we have to beware is the one who sets himself up as an authority and tends to make his own dogmas; the layman, too, who allows an anti-clerical prejudice to warp his vision of the authoritative teaching of the Church.

We might draw a parallel with the field of medicine; for few people are ready to submit their health to the care of a 'quack'

doctor who lacks official training and sets himself up as an authority on his own limited experience. Nevertheless medicine has often benefited by the ideas or chance discoveries of the 'layman' who has had the humility to submit them to the experts. It may be that the lay-medico might do yet more were he able to publish his findings or suggestions under expert supervision.

So we hope to be able to encourage lay writers to send their contributions especially with a view to assisting the lay reader to live 'The Life' in the ordinary surroundings of daily life.



## TOBIAS—A NEGLECTED CLASSIC

P. A. BANNISTER

IT is a pity that the story of Tobias is not more widely read by Christians and that it is used so little in the religious instruction of children. Although one of the inspired books of the Old Testament, it is also, as the Monks of Maredsous have pointed out,<sup>1</sup> 'a true guide for the righteous which the Christian can use with practically no modification'.

We need not worry if the versions of the story contain dubious details, or if St Jerome took only one day to translate the Aramaic text into the Latin of the Vulgate. However much they may vary the antics of young Tobias's dog or the description of his adventure with the large fish, all the different versions give a vivid account of the lives of an impoverished and uprooted Jewish family which is at the same time a work of art.

The hardships endured by old Tobias and his family are familiar enough to our world where mass deportations are so nearly accepted as part of the technique of government that newspaper editors have tired of reporting them. Its happy ending is the main difference between the story of Tobias and nearly all the accounts

<sup>1</sup> *A Guide to the Bible*. By the Monks of Maredsous. (Sands & Co.).