

'THE CROSS AND THE PLOUGH'

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS.

Sir,—The announcement in the current issue (Ladyday 1949) of the *Cross and the Plough* of its 'suspension' of publication sounds ominously like the death rattle of 'the Catholic Land Movement of England and Wales'. The Editor states that resumption will depend on one or more of three things—(a) suitable improvement in the Editor's health, which medical advisers consider unlikely; (b) his discovery of a suitable successor; (c) such a change of heart in Government and Public as would make the work of continuation worth while. He goes on to say, 'But the general attitude in Church and State is such that no early action, or desire for action, is to be looked for before the impending crash. A curious and culpable blindness seems to affect all concerned. In these circumstances the effort of continued publication is not worth while.'

This sad farewell calls for some comment. First, a word of thanks to Mr Robbins for the fine work he has done in editing *The Cross and the Plough*, and secondly a word of sympathy to him in his present indisposition. But now, as to his words 'No early action, or desire for action, is to be looked for before the impending crash'—is this the truth? Does it concern us to foster a return to the land before a possibly 'impending crash'? And if so, why is there such a lack of interest in doing something? Can anything yet be done?

To the first question, I suggest that it is everybody's concern to do all he can to bring people to a right outlook, followed where possible by action, in the matter of food production. Is it possible that people realise that, for instance, we now depend on Russia (since this country has signed a Trade Agreement with Poland to the extent of some £130,000,000) for the supplying of a large quantity of our food? I am not suggesting that we do not need at present to import such food (which, says *The Tablet*, could be provided by our own Empire) but stating it as a surely very dangerous condition of our existence.

As regards our lack of interest—as Catholics—in land settlement, perhaps Mr Robbins underestimates the attempts that have been made, and the very great difficulties, material and spiritual, even of country-bred Catholics, that confront those who try to make a living off the land, whether by family holdings or in communities. And I believe there are still many who, given the necessary financial backing and spiritual help, would be only too willing to try.

Finally, can anything yet be done? The Catholic Land Federation died many years ago. Other groups and communities have since tried and failed. Perhaps it was not God's will that such attempts should succeed. At all events, I believe the time is now ripe, and the circumstances highly favourable for a new line of approach to be made.

Hardly a week passes without an announcement in the Catholic press of the acquisition by some Catholic body of a large country house with property attached. Here, I suggest, is that necessary material and spiritual security to be found by the would-be land settler, if the Catholic body will show itself co-operative. The latter will naturally want to make the best use of the property, and at the same time provide for the material requirements of the community living in the big house. But the cost of labour is high, and, as regards communities of Religious, lay brothers are difficult to find. If the work of garden and farm could be given over to Catholic laymen the latter would be able to perform a truly sanctified labour, while the community could become more and more self-supporting and healthily fed (and even clothed!). Needless to expound the argument farther, and to let one's imagination reach out towards the creation of that microcosm of society—the ideal Benedictine community. But that is my point. If the Deluge is to come, let us build the Ark—many Arks: if it is not, well, what better work than the Restoration of *all things in Christ*?—Yours, etc.,

BROTHER HUGH M. TODD, O.S.M.

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS.

Sir,—As a Victorian child, disciplined—as apparently Miss Mary Grain would desire—with a dog-whip, may I suggest that terrorism is the first and most obvious method of producing shiftily and self-indulgent children. The shiftiness is protective, the self-indulgence compensatory—if no one else is going to protect and cherish you, you must protect and cherish yourself.

We are not responsible for original sin—except in so far as we produce children; but we are responsible for environment. Personally I regret that all the care and cockering is devoted to the lapsed and lost: who would seldom have fallen on the wayside, given decent homes and an inspiring apprenticeship to life.

But where are the decent homes and where is the inspiring apprenticeship?—Yours, etc.,

HELEN PARRY EDEN

REVIEWS

DANTE THE PHILOSOPHER. By Etienne Gilson. Translated by David Moore. (Sheed and Ward; 15s.)

Sooner or later M. Gilson was sure to write a book on Dante; the subject suits him so well. Few professional *dantisti* have a tenth of his knowledge of medieval philosophy, but what counts more in this book is that he is himself both a philosopher and a man of letters. He can write about philosophers and poets without