

EDITORIAL

NEWSPAPERS and reviews have a great deal in common with individuals. Like men and women they have their peculiar characteristics, their different points of view, their private opinions; they have their dreams and ambitions, hopes and fears. They pass through moods and phases, have growing-pains, succeed or fail in the business of their life.

A great opportunity is waiting for someone to write the biography of any paper. It would be a very human document. If the writer were smitten with the modern craze, he could write it from a psychological standpoint, and reveal to the world the hitherto unguessed complexes that were responsible for its success or failure. He could describe how, while still in swaddling clothes, it was thrown to the critics for their cruel dissection, and how its hyper-sensitive nature never really survived that painful ordeal, with the result that all through its life it showed signs of agoraphobia, and was of such a retiring disposition that if anybody made a noise like a critic, it raised not even a still, small voice in self-defence, and ultimately allowed itself to be submerged into utter silence. That would serve as the pathetic life-story of one type of paper. A great deal could be made of the last time it went to press, to emerge unwanted, never to be read.

But the reverse of this might be true. In that case the biography would begin with the paper waking up for the first time in print and finding itself famous. It had the great will to succeed, knew its own mind, and rode rough-shod over the faces of its critics. It did not even know there was such a thing as an inferiority complex, or desire that must be repressed and sublimated into something else. None of these internal phenomena disturbed its healthy circulation,

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or hampered its triumphant march. It was born a prodigy and grew up into a giant. Perhaps it was a little unscrupulous in its methods, and rather given to exhibitionism; but after all, these things were signs of life and resulted in nett sales by the million.

It is a pity these stories are not written. They would show what it feels like to be read by thousands of people, and what kind of nasty remarks people make as they read.

These thoughts have been prompted by the fact that with this number BLACKFRIARS enters upon the fifth year of its existence. As it cannot speak for itself, and tell what people say about it, it is necessary to rely largely on hearsay for the opinion folk have of it. These opinions are often amusing, but seldom helpful. They come from far afield. A little story comes from a famous winter resort in Switzerland. Scene: Hotel-garden. Time: Coffee after lunch. Dramatis personæ: Two Contented Lunchers, and one friendly Eavesdropper. First C.L.: What is that Magazine? Second C.L.: Oh, that is BLACKFRIARS. First C.L.: Is that the Dominican review? Second C.L.: Yes. The Dominicans edit it. It's quite different from other reviews. First C.L.: Now you mention it, I think I've heard of it. It's supposed to be *terribly* highbrow, isn't it? (*Enter the waiter with liqueurs.*) Others write: 'You are dreadfully solemn. Can't we have a cross-word puzzle?' or 'I wish you would liven up a bit. A good detective story now——.' 'Why do you always seem to take the opposite view to everyone else, every time, in everything?' We are not complaining of these criticisms, we like them. We should like to collect them under the title, 'What people say about it.' But the things other people say incline us to continue to develop on the present lines. Many readers are even glad there are no competitions or adventure stories in BLACKFRIARS. They like to look upon it as

the 'Review that is Different,' that is not afraid to tell the truth, and that tries to shed the light of Catholic teaching on modern problems for the instruction of those who read, while at the same time finding a place for art and letters.

So BLACKFRIARS begins its new year with a stout heart, in the hope of finding many new friends in the shape of readers and contributors during the coming months. The old friends, many of four years standing, are very faithful: their interest is sincere and lasting. Is it too much to ask them to try and spread that friendly interest among those about them, and in this way help on the circulation of the review? It is an excellent thing to lend BLACKFRIARS; but it is a far better thing to find a new subscriber who will buy it regularly. A copy lent so often means another copy unsold, unread. If every reader would find another during the coming year, BLACKFRIARS would soon find itself in the company of those fortunate journals that with no uncertain eye can 'look time's leaguer down.'

EDITOR.