

EDITORIAL

THE launching of anything has its perils : and peril is the preliminary either to joy attained or hope frustrated. The shipwright with a tense uncertainty watching his vessel leave the stocks for the water, discovers with almost a sense of surprise that she does not turn turtle, but floats as a ship should. It seemed almost too much to expect that all his calculations, his adjustments of balance and ballast should have been so nicely gauged. His emotion is akin to the sort of astonishment a novice in archery feels when his shaft hits the mark.

Something of this sensation of suspense and surprise has been experienced in launching BLACKFRIARS. It is too soon perhaps to rejoice at not having foundered before we have braved a storm. Still, it is something to have made a beginning, to have been received kindly and to know that the first numbers have succeeded beyond our hopes.

Naturally a first number always wins a large circulation. It is a novelty. Mere curiosity might urge one to buy it in order to try it. Still, a review cannot long remain a novelty. Curiosity is easily disappointed : it is said to have brought the cat to an untimely end and it does not confer long life on monthly reviews. Kindness has been showered on us ; but not by kindness alone can we hope to live.

The only success BLACKFRIARS aspires to win is that arising from the just appreciation of its message. We hope to gain the sympathy and support of those who feel that, in these days no less than in the days of David, "*truths are decayed among men, and there is now no saint.*"

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Yet amid this very real decadence and decay there is an ever increasing number of men sincerely groping for the truth. *Res clamat Domino*. The human mind, which is a gift of God, naturally tends truthwards, and every sincere attempt to reach the truth is something to the good. Spiritualism even has its element of good if it only denies materialism and hints at an unseen world, better and more enduring than this. Theosophy with all its perversions and perversities seems for many a genuine seeking after some union of creature and Creator. Christian Science exalts Faith into an extravagance, but at least it denies unbelief. Socialism is no longer synonymous with Anarchy and Revolution, but is the human expression of man's quest for the second of the cardinal virtues. Everywhere there are signs of a desire for the truth. Too often we, who possess the God-given truth called Faith, are so eager to point out where men are wrong that we forget where they are right. To show them where they are right may be the first step to showing them where they are wrong. Our opportunities are unique and our responsibilities consequently enormous.

One may compare the Catholic opportunity of to-day with that of a century ago. In 1836 *The Dublin Review* appeared as the first big Catholic venture in periodical literature. In those days the outlook was Egyptian darkness compared with ours. Among Catholics, writers were rare and money rarer still. Yet this effort of faith and courage has been justified. One cannot but remember with gratitude the *Dublin* article that smote Newman with the words *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*. "By these words of the ancient father, interpreting and summing up the long and varied course of ecclesiastical history, the theory of the *Via Media* was absolutely pulverized" (Apologia), and Newman turned towards the *Via Veritatis*.

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To-day there are difficulties enough for a periodical publication, but they are not the same difficulties Wiseman had to face. Above all there is no dearth of writers. An editor is rather at pains to find reasons for non-acceptance of much excellent matter submitted. His persistent worry is the financial one and such unromantic items as the price of paper. Still, we season our worries with hope.

In an article on *The Movies* in the April number, Father Martindale spoke of the possibility of a professedly Catholic Cinema. Mr. Vincent Wareing sends from New York information on this point that is both interesting and illuminating. He calls attention to the activities of *The Catholic Art Association* which is responsible for some excellent objectively Catholic films.

“During the past three months,” he says, “I have travelled a few thousand miles in America and have seen the activities of *The Catholic Art Association* in centres so wide apart as ‘the neighbourhood of Niagara’ and also Boston Harbour, to say nothing of New York State. *The C.A.A.* has about fourteen well equipped branch offices; its headquarters are in Fifth Avenue; its directorate includes one of the most distinguished of America’s laymen scholars (Dr. Condé Pallen, Ph.D., LL.D., one of the editors of *The Catholic Encyclopædia*) and each of its executive officers is a man who made good in some aspect of the Movie business long before they thought of producing purely Catholic pictures.

“Perhaps, after all, so far as the Movies are concerned, Catholics are first in the field. Personally I do not frequent picture palaces, but I have seen not a few of the best productions, and I do not hesitate to say that *The Victim*, a nine-reeler dealing with the seal of the Confessional is the most intensely moving

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Movie I've ever seen. It inculcates a strong faith in the inviolability of the Sacrament of Penance and a great reverence for the priesthood. Priests have stated repeatedly that this film has been the means of bringing more than one stray sheep back to the fold. Another great film, *The Burning Question*, deals with the evils of Bolshevism and incidentally depicts most poignantly not only *Communion on the Battlefield* but the chaplain assisting a passing soul on its last journey.

"It was in the spacious hall of the Jesuit College at Boston that I saw *The C.A.A.'s Eternal Light* . . . This film is a picturization of the Gospel. It moved the audience to tears of which they were unashamed."

Mr. Wareing says that he hopes to bring some of these pictures over for exhibition in England. One wonders how they will be received, not so much by the picture-going public as by those in the Film Business who decide on purely financial considerations what the public wants.

From the pageantry point of view Catholic subjects make ideal films ; but the costuming and staging make them costly in production. The Film Firms, apart from their shyness of "religious propaganda" and all the sinister implications of those words, would naturally regard them as financially hopeless.

Still one hopes that Catholics will realize that here is not only an opportunity for ennobling the cinema, which can so easily become a degrading influence, but a way of helping to serve truth.

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