

# BLACKFRIARS

(With which is incorporated *The Catholic Review*.)

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## EDITORIAL NOTES

ONE of the curious reactions of present conditions in Germany is the complete change of parties and their re-alignment here in England as a result of what has happened under the new regime. All during the years that Germany was at war with England there were some here who gave themselves nobly to the defence of the acts of their enemies and who performed the very useful task of bidding us wait for surer information before we condemned on mere hearsay stories of German brutality put about by excited and prejudiced persons. Even when the war was done, they still continued their admirable task of softening our animosities and stilling our rancour. It might be felt by some that their actions and speeches, though charmingly tactful to our enemies or late enemies were not always tactful to us: perhaps a noble compliment to our less sensitive righteousness.

It is interesting to notice how strangely these roles for the moment are reversed. The kind comrades to our enemies have of late become almost venomous in tone to them. Indeed, did we not know them to be pacifist in temper and international in their outlook, we might be afraid for the violence of their language and the vigour of their denunciations. We are indeed assured by our experience of them that if—which may the Lord avert!—in conse-

quence of their denunciations war were again to fall between us they would be the first to change their tone and become again friendly to their adversaries. These leaders whose literary and liberal eloquence we all admire can only be bitter to their friends. For this attitude the Americans have an excellent phrase; they say of men almost too just to their enemies and almost unjust to their friends (out of a love of perfect impartiality and tolerance), that they are 'so straight they bend over backwards.

Such are these confirmed pacifists: for notice that those who blamed us, no doubt with admirable caution, for believing in the stories of German atrocities during the war, are now themselves regaling us with stories of German atrocities from the same sources as before, or at least the same type of source, namely excited and prejudiced persons. What wonder that we should in the meantime have learnt our lesson so well from them, that we do not believe what is told us about atrocities, even though now it reaches us from their own lips? We were so convincingly persuaded by them to refuse credence to Lord Bryce's Report that neither *The Manchester Guardian* nor *The News Chronicle* can now move us to believe a word they themselves say on this matter of violence. We are so aptly fashioned into their wisdom that we now refuse to believe them when they themselves act contrary to the principles they taught.

We have only this misgiving. Perhaps after all they never did have any principles, before or now. Supposing that all the while they were swayed by mere emotion. Is it possible that bereft of all principles since they do not accept teaching but only sentiment, they should all the time have been false leaders, nobly intentioned, loving mankind, without prejudice or favour, kindly to their foes, but nevertheless false because without rational support? Is it possible?

How melancholy a spectacle to those who still hope that man shall one day achieve perfection, to watch the fall of those leaders from rectitude to passion, from impartiality to prejudice, from pacifism to angry rebuke that almost savours of intervention and so of armed assault! That is the disadvantage of refusing to accept any doctrine on peace

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or war. They will always be the same, but always different from the principles of the Faith. With us the paradox runs rather in this that during war-time our Catholicism makes our nationalism suspect, for then our efforts after peace make others wonder whether we accept the possible righteousness of war; whereas in peace time we refuse to say all war is wrong. In war-time we are suspect to the militarist whereas in peace-time we are suspect to the pacifist. But then our teaching is clear in both cases; it is clear because it is based on principle. Theirs is not clear because it is supported by the wavering emotions of those who can pitch the best tale.

The Pope has given us the lead here as elsewhere. With his teaching we can find our way in and out of the puzzling policies of this troubled time.

EDITOR.