

BLACKFRIARS

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

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REMARKS

NEW AND ADMIRABLE. In these terms was Catholic cinema work described in the letter of the Cardinal Secretary of State to the Archbishop of Utrecht, conveying the Apostolic Blessing to all who share in its foundation and development. The need is urgent. It is said that in this country every day about one-and-a-half million people go to the cinema. The influences they are subjected to are certainly not so healthy as they might be. It is no use working up an ethical flurry and denouncing universal corruption. As a matter of fact, films supposed to be taken up entirely with 'Sex,' sometimes preach lessons of absurdly quixotic virtue. All the same, it should be a matter of grave concern that our influence is negligible in the formation of the most powerful teaching influence of the day.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE. In response to the Pope's wish, small groups have been active in various countries, though not in our own. But their work for the most part has been negative or very secondary, the publication of critical lists of films good and bad, principally as a guide to parents, and the production of small religious films and instructional films for schools. The proscription of a film awakens a not altogether unhealthy desire to see it; some of the religious films have been merely puerile; and the production of films for schools, though most important in the matter of education, leaves the cinema problem untouched.

THE FIRST FILM. Ordinary audiences must be reached, and for this it would be well to make a test case of a **big** film,

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first-rate as to acting, direction, production, and fit to stand comparison with *I was a Spy* or *The Constant Nymph*. There is no lack of Catholic subjects for a scenario; to take three almost at random—St. Francis Xavier, Sobieski, or Herr von Kiihnelt-Leddihn's novel, *The Gates of Hell*. According to expert information the present time is favourable for the success of films of historical and 'spiritual' interest, even by the box-office test. It is essential that the film should not be a homily disguised as entertainment, a moral illustrated by shadows of angelic virtue and clownish or diabolic vice. It should avoid close-ups of rapt expressions, and if a priest is introduced he should be commonsense and bullet-headed, neither having an aureole of white hair nor indulging in vague comforting gestures. It might be a good thing for the director to be temperamentally bored with religion.

THE FIRST STEP. Something must be done in this country to second the Pope's wishes. Presumably the first step should be the formation of an active committee to explore ways and means, and to work in collaboration with similar committees in other countries, and particularly in France. These notes may serve at least to direct attention to a work in which before long, it is hoped, a definite achievement may be registered.

MAHLER. A few looked forward to the B.B.C. performance of Mahler's Ninth Symphony as to the outstanding musical event of February, and now others as well are considering whether they have discovered another great master. For us he belongs to the earthly treasury of the Church. Historically we know that he was an ardent Catholic, we can recognize it almost from his works, even those of us who are prejudiced against what is called 'a religious spirit' in music. One kind of religious music is church music, and that should mean, as Rome directs, something objective, common, workmanlike and strong. But apart from this, and from sacred music up to a century ago, how frequently are fruity, drifting, yearning sounds thought to express the appropriate mood for religion. There is some justification in fact for associating religious and Wurlitzer broadcasts. But Mahler comes to rescue the idea, with his involution, sophistication, his sense of space, of unfulfilment. Though

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in the great tradition of Vienna, his work to some may seem to sprawl. But the groundwork of religion is not the neat canons and patterns of the reason alone, still less the meanderings of sensation, but the whole of human experience, now certain, now desiring more than it knows. Mahler may be compared to Claudel, and a literary commentary on his symphonic music found in *The Satin Slipper*.

SPECULATION. For this great musical figure we must thank the patronage of the Hapsburg Empire. This Austrian Catholic Jew would never have risen to eminence in a severely Aryan Middle Europe. The new Germany, will it deprive us of future Mahlers?

HOMESPUN THEOLOGY. It would be ungrateful and absurd to decry the value of Distributism or to do anything than work for the extension of the various Catholic Land Associations. They are affirming and establishing principles and facts necessary for the very life and health of the country. However the equation of Catholic civilization and primitiveness needs to be guarded against, still more the tendency to put our theological eggs in the hand-woven basket. The attack made by a section among Catholics on the new forms of civilization made possible by machinery may well proceed from rustic tastes, natural or affected, or from panic in face of the size of the Machine. Simple tastes are not the same as simple truths.

THE CATHOLIC HOLIDAY SPIRIT. Under this title Fr. F. H. Drinkwater wrote sensibly and correctively in a recent *Catholic Times*. 'How strange that any Catholic should be afraid of this new leisured era which is now upon us. In the Catholic-middle ages they understood well enough that man should work to live, not live to work. They believed strongly in holidays, and plenty of them.'

PRESCIENCE OF LEISURE. He continues: 'Already, as if by some divine instinct, the mind of the Church has been feeling its way in that direction. The movement for frequent and daily communion, for instance, is one which could never come to its full fruition under the pressure of industrial conditions of life. The liturgical movement, too, is gathering strength in preparation for the days to come when men will have time for **God** in their lives . . .

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New religious foundations, such as the Grail, with freer organization and more modern rules, are springing up all over the Church, to meet, in one way or another, this problem of education for leisure. The renaissance of amateur religious drama is only one sign of something that is everywhere stirring in the Catholic mind and heart. The pilgrimage habit is another; and the cordial blessing which the Church gives to the Scout movement and to the modern interest in athletic sports—the list could easily be continued.’ Of course there is opposition—the Scout movement has been criticized as naturalismus, and one remembers the bishop in Brittany who forbade his young men to play football in shorts. Fr. Drinkwater takes his opponents in rear when he appeals to the middle ages and the liturgical revival.

ALPINE. An undomesticated Catholic periodical is one of our needs, and *The Colosseum*, to judge from the first number, looks like supplying it, ‘What we intend to say is too sincere for us to sit back and pay scholarly compliments.’ The writers demand for themselves plenty of elbow-room; their attitude is more courageous than cautious; in the clatter of publicity they are not afraid of adding to the noise. All this is said in praise. One emphasis of their negative criticism is Piling on the Agony. But whether expressed by the primitive school (not represented by *The Colosseum*) or by the hyper-modern school of Catholics, all this talk of the death-throes of civilization and the growing decay of man tends to forget that the apparatus of civilization may not go very deep, and that large tracts of human experience remain very much the same—friendship, pain, food, death, loss, sin, sacrifice, the profound recognition that we are all still waiting for something. But this is a digression. There is a place for jaggy criticism. ‘Ezra Pound in writing Canto **DXXX** *Toute notre civilisation est aphrodisiaque* . . . the shops are closing, lamplight blurs on wet November streets, a chemist’s assistant drags the automatic machine into the doorway. . . Does science leave room for God? . . . the little daughter of the governor of Vera Cruz sings a hymn to the Devil . . . Skodakruppsvickers, Ltd. . . . the churches must get together . . . , massed choirs sing *I’m a Nordic baby* . . .

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chorus of German pastors: *Bethlehem's a suburb of Berlin*, etc., etc. But *The Colosseum* promises construction as well. 'Stat Crux . . . The Cross on the Dome . . . the fortress of God . . . the house on the rock.' And

*Dis qu'as-tu fait, toi que voilà,
De ta jeunesse?*

is answered by *Deus firmavit orbem terrae, qui non commovebitur.*

We warmly welcome and commend to our readers this new quarterly.

JACOBIN.

EXCERPTA

YOUNG EUROPE. Those who are perplexed by the numberless new revolutionary movements in Western Europe will find much help in obtaining a bird's-eye view of the situation from Fraulein Demmig's article in the February number of DER GRAL. Although treating *ex professo* of *The Spirit of Revolution in France* she succeeds in integrating into her general scheme movements so diverse as German Nazism, Italian Fascism, the Belgian *Ligue d'autorite*, *Esprit nouveau* and the Flemish separatists, our own *New Britain*, Blackshirts and Greenshirts, as well as the French Groups: *Troisième Force*, *Esprit*, *Prelude*, *Re'action* and *Ordre nouveau*. 'To-day,' she writes, 'practically all Europe finds itself infected with the spirit of revolution. Although everything that has hitherto been understood by European unity seems to have collapsed, new points of contact and agreement have been established between the various nations through the common characteristics of their respective revolutionary movements. We can divide the European nations of to-day into two groups according as these movements have made greater or less progress: on the one hand is the Old Europe in which democracy, parliamentarianism, liberalism and capitalism still prevail, and the New Europe which has overthrown these things. But the nations even of the Old Europe—