

EDITORIAL

IRELAND AND THE WORLD

IT must always seem an impertinence to make judgments about a country that is not one's own, and in the sad story of England and Ireland nothing over the centuries has caused a juster resentment than the confident capacity of Englishmen to be sure of what is good for the Irish. It was Dr Johnson who observed that 'The Irish are a fair people; they never speak well of one another', and the most casual of English visitors will know how radical such domestic criticism can be, and how perilous may be his own intervention.

But for English-speaking Catholics everywhere, Ireland is in a measure an adopted country, and its affairs can never be a matter of indifference to them. The fidelity in faith of countless Irishmen has as a simple matter of fact secured the immense growth of the Church, not only in all English-speaking lands, but in the remotest missionary fields of Asia and Africa no less. For Irish priests and members of religious orders bring, as they must, to their work the inheritance of a land and a history that are their own. They are not Melchisedecs, without father or mother, exempt from the loyalties of place and time. And the infinite armies of Irish emigrants who have peopled the Catholic parishes of Britain and America, however closely they may have been integrated into the life of their adopted countries, still look to their origins, still find it natural to think of Ireland as their spiritual home.

At a time when the shadow of war lies deep over the world we know, it must be an instant duty of Catholics to purge the very appearance of senseless rivalries within the unity of the Faith by which they live. And the figure of Ireland, distorted as it may be by the legacy of ancient wrongs, should be the figure of reconciliation. For here, at the westernmost point of Europe, is a society that is today uniquely Christian; imperfect, as any human society must be, yet capable by its example of exposing the futility of a world without faith. And every Irishman, however unimportant he may seem, should be its ambassador, discernible by signs more compelling than his brogue. Perhaps the missionary vocation of the Irish may reach an importance as yet unguessed at. But the

responsibility lies heavy on those, clergy and laity, who in Ireland are concerned with building a society that serves God and serves the just rights of men.

The purpose of this issue of *BLACKFRIARS*, written as it is by Irishmen, is to assist, however modestly, the work of interpretation. It may do something to inform Englishmen of what Ireland's life may mean today; and all who are debtors to Ireland's fidelity, and to the roots of her culture, may in turn ask that Ireland should see her problems as not merely her own. The giving-and-taking that is the mark of civilised life demands a tolerance and generosity of judgment that are the natural virtues which charity exists to perfect. Within the citadel of the Faith, no problem, however local it may seem, is ever without its effect on all alike whose home is there.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

THE EARL OF WICKLOW; director of Clonmore and Reynolds, Ltd; formerly editor of *The Dublin Review*; author of *Pius XI and World Peace*.

ALFRED O'RAHILLY; President of University College, Cork; mathematician, philosopher, economist; author of numerous books including most recently *The Family at Bethany*.

ROGER MCHUGH; lecturer in English at University College, Dublin; has lectured in U.S.A.

JEROME TONER, O.P.; professor of philosophy at the Dominican House of Studies, Tallaght, Co. Dublin.

JAMES WHITE; art critic of *The Standard*; contributor to *Studio* and other art reviews.