EDITORIAL

A LADY complained the other day that BLACKFRIARS always gave her the "blues." "Your writers are always so disgruntled: they are always grousing about something. Everything is wrong. The whole social system is wrong: the politicians are all wrong: the way women dress is wrong."—This was the substance of her severe censure. Argument is not often profitable with a person in this frame of mind. Therefore instead of arguing or denying her somewhat sweeping statements, I tactfully cross-examined her on some of the less gloomy articles that have appeared in the Review in the course of the last year and discovered that by some unlucky chance, she had entirely missed reading those efforts of our contributors in their more cheery moods.

But as a matter of fact that is not really the line one should take against such a complaint. We should not be at pains to prove that BLACKFRIARS is not so black as it is painted. We should rather apologize that it is not a great deal blacker. For instance, it is difficult to feel anything but black and cheerless about the millions who are starving in Russia; we are not necessarily pessimists because we feel sad or angry about the millions of unemployed in this country; and we should have an insane sense of humour surely if we could indulge in mirth about Ireland. It is a mistake to imagine that an optimist is one who goes about saying cheerily that all is right with the world—when apparently it isn't. Such a man is foolishly doing violence to the truth and to his own imagination and intelligence. The real optimist is he who sees things just as black as they are and yet can still hope and pray for a ray of light. The consummate optimist is the man who has every reason for being a pessimist—and isn't. Moreover, a Christian optimist who believes in immortality can console himself with hope when unduly oppressed by the present blackness; he will not be over-anxious about everything being right

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in this world, provided it is all right in the next. Still Christian resignation will, we hope, never induce men simply to sit down and put up with things, when by shouting they might help to make things a little better. We have not just stoically to make the best of an impossible world : we must make of it the best of all possible worlds—or at least make it a little less impossible than it has been during the past seven years.

But we may tell ourselves that we do not take ourselves so seriously as that. We are no world reformers : we feel ourselves too insignificant and too unimportant to start putting the world straight and righting the ills of humanity. We leave all that to the Washington Conference, to the League of Nations, or to " our elected representatives." We are modest, and we profess to have no illusions about the weight of our infinitesimal influence in such colossal affairs. Now there is no need to quote the rhyme about " the little drops of water and the little grains of sand," but there does seem to be need to try and impress upon Catholics the enormous power they could wield for good if they were only properly organized and federated.

We wish that all Catholics would read Father Martindale's stirring words in the October number of the *Inter-University Magazine*. Therein he tells us that a Federation of the Catholic Societies in our Universities and University Colleges has been formed : statutes have been drawn up and cordially approved by His Eminence Cardinal Bourne and most of the Hierarchy. This " Federation " is to be confederated with the *Pax Romana*, the name given to the periodical Assembly of Catholic students from all parts of Europe. The aim of the " Federation " is to link up the Catholic students in England and the *Pax Romana* will link up the different national " Federations." This is a splendid move in the right direction : it is an effort to get back to the days (before railways and

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rapid travel) when there was more interchange of ideas between the Continental Universities and our own. It always seems strange that this interfusion of idea between different nations should have been most apparent when means of communication were most difficult. Perhaps we in these times travel too quickly and visit too many places, and therefore do we learn so little. We fulfil the paradox of Thomas à'Kempis, *Qui multum peregrinantur raro profisciscuntur*. In the Middle Ages the pilgrim of learning who tramped across Europe from Paris to Cologne or Bologna or sailed across the seas and visited Oxford probably gathered a more leisurely, more accurate and more universal knowledge of Europe than we do with our expresses, our newspapers and wireless telegraphy.

The " Federation " and the *Pax Romana* form a fine effort to link up students throughout the world already bound by the common tie of the Catholic faith. It is fervently to be hoped that this federating spirit will spread among the many Catholic organizations in this country. It is not more organization that the Catholic body needs in England, still less does it need more organizations. We are thoroughly organized, but too frequently it is a sectional and parochial organization : there is a good deal of overlapping (we notice it chiefly when we tread on one another's toes). We do not need more organization, but more linking up, more welding together, more federating. We justly pride ourselves on our unity—a unity that goes deeper down than sentiment, a unity that can even disregard racial and national hatreds, a unity that is quickened by a Divine love. If we could only transfuse some of that unity into our social relations, into our attitude towards the Press, towards the paganism of modern legislation, surely we should be a greater force for good in the country. If we were not only united in belief, but confederated for action, surely no power could withstand us.

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