CORRESPONDENCE

COLOUR IN THE LITURGY

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS.

SIR,—In view of the inflexible character which the liturgical laws seem to assume in the article on *Colour in the Liturgy* (BLACKFRIARS, March), I may be permitted to make a few observations.

Whilst admitting in general the necessity of the altar frontal and the tabernacle veil, it seems less certain that this rule does not permit exceptions, which need not be regarded as abuses. The authentic collections of the Congregation of Rites do not represent a codification of liturgical law, but an incomplete compilation of solutions of local problems, not always mutually reconcilable, and in the main constituting, except for where they were issued, directive norms rather than precepts necessarily to be enforced by all and in every place and circumstance. Writers on the Liturgy, therefore, usually admit that the cloth altar frontal (antipendium) is not of strict obligation, when the permanent frontal of the altar is made of marble, or otherwise ornate in its material or design, or in the form of a tomb (*cf.* Gasparri, *De Eucharistia*, Vol. II, 768; Ojetti, *Synopsis Rerum Moralium et Juris Pont.*, Sub. v. 'Antipendium'; Barin, *Catechismo Liturgico*, Vol. I, p. 188). The law with regard to the tabernacle veil (conopoeum) inasmuch as its primary function is to indicate the presence of the Blessed Sacrament within, is more rigorous, but the law is not of such a kind as to be entirely unbending in the face of local conditions. Thus it is held that the tabernacle veil is not of strict necessity when the tabernacle is precious and of ornate design and surmounted by a baldachino (*cf.* Gasparri, *op. cit.*, 995; Ojetti, *op. cit.*, Sub. v. 'Conopoeum'). These opinions are not so liberal as they may seem, since they are confirmed by the Roman practice. Even after a searching canonical visitation, no tabernacle veils are to be seen in the major basilicas at Rome, nor in a few other churches. Likewise it would be a difficult task to count the number of altars which are devoid of the antipendium. The failure to use the coloured frontal in no way diminishes the liturgical significance attached to the stripping of the altars on Maundy Thursday, since that symbolism is sufficiently displayed, and most realistically, by the removal of the altar-cloths.

For the present we can only look forward to the day when a codification of liturgical law will be accomplished, gathering

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up together multitudes of regulations which are often difficult to discover, and their intended application still more difficult to know. Perhaps then, too, we should be in a position to discern with certainty which are preceptive or only directive rubrics.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

Collegio Angelico, Rome.

THOUGHTS ON READING 'THE WASTE LAND'

THE mind runs back along its railway lines
Parading memory;
Objects of sense in mathematic rows,
Opening vistas, closing eras,
Like the fluttered pages of a book held in tired hands,
Each page printed in one printed
And decipherable language having common terms
And many footnotes breaking up the pages
Untidily,
Making loop-lines and branch-lines,
Circumscribing history.

Egypt! Egypt! Change here for Babylon,
Medes and Chaldees.
(Stopping at Ur for tea, Madam;
Mind your umbrella in the door.)
Next stop Cnossus. (No, Sir, not Parnassus,
There's a stoppage on the line.)
Egypt! Egypt! All stations to Paradise!

Like a tripper in a char-a-banc
The mind among the remains of men.
Like a hiker eating tinned peaches on Box Hill,
The mind among the stratified Pleistocene.

This is so very Bloomsbury, Mr. Eliot,
This little mind like a lamp in a closed room
Exhausting its own atmosphere.
One cannot outlive these suffocating smells
Or hear the hurdy-gurdy on a winter afternoon
Churning his song:
'The window,
The window,
We pushed him through the window . . . .'
No doubt it saved his metaphysics from inanition.
The window was closed, if you remember,
And the light could not get through the dirty panes.

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