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Oscar Wilde  
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Vol. 7



**Canon Beeching on Oscar Wilde. —**  
**Bishop of St. Albans and Mr. Fillingham.**  
**— Services for Trippers.**

Canon Beeching, in his sermon at the Abbey on Sunday, passed a severe condemnation on the late Oscar Wilde's book, "De Profundis." He said: "A book has lately appeared which presents a caricature of the portrait of Christ and especially a travesty of His doctrine about sin, that is quite astonishing; and with one or two honourable exceptions the daily and weekly Press have praised the book enthusiastically, and especially the study it gives of the character of Christ; whereas, if that picture were true, the Pharisees were right when they said of Him that He cast out devils through Beelzebub, and the priests were right in sending Him to death as a perverter of the people."

\* \* \* \*

"The writer of the book, who is dead," continued the Canon, "was a man of exceptional literary talent, who fell into disgrace; and whether it is pity for his sad fate or admiration of his style in writing that has cast a spell upon reviewers, and blinded them to his meaning, I cannot say; but I do say they have not done their duty to English society by lauding the book as they have done, without giving parents and guardians some hint that it preaches a doctrine of sin, which, if taken into romantic and impressionable hearts, will send them quickly down the road to shame. The chief point on which the writer fixes is Christ's behaviour to the sinners, and his theory is that Christ consorted with them because He found them more interesting than the good people, who were stupid."

\* \* \* \*

"But even this writer, absolutely shameless and unabashed as he is, does not hint that Christ Himself gained His moral beauty by sinning. The lowest depth of woo is theirs who call evil good and good evil, for that is a poisoning of the well of life. What is the use of calling Jesus 'good' if we destroy the very meaning of goodness? May God have pardoned the sin of the man who put this stumbling block in the way of the simple, and may He shield our boys and young men from that doctrine of devils that the way to perfection lies through sin."

\* \* \* \*

Referring to the Fillingham case, the Bishop of St. Albans writes in "The Princess Magazine":



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DAILY NEW, April 4, 1905

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2019-03-18

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**Misstatements About His Last Days in**  
**Paris Corrected.**

*From the St. James's Gazette.*

The complacent unanimity with which the chroniclers of Oscar Wilde's last years in Paris have accepted and spread the "legend" of his life in that city is remarkable, and would be exasperating considering its utter falsity to any one who was not aware of their incompetence to deal with the subject. Scarcely one of his self-constituted biographers had more than the very slightest acquaintance with him, and their records and impressions of him are chiefly made up of stale gossip and second hand anecdotes. The stories of his supposed privations, his frequent inability to obtain a square meal, his lonely and tragic death in a sordid lodging, and his cheap funeral are all grotesquely false.

True, Oscar Wilde, who for several years before his conviction had been making at least £5,000 a year, found it very hard to live on his rather precarious income after he came out of prison; he was often very "hard up," and often did not know where to turn for a coin, but I will undertake to prove to any one whom it may concern that from the day he left prison till the day of his death his income averaged at least £400 a year. He had, moreover, far too many devoted friends in Paris ever to be in need of a meal provided he would take the trouble to walk a few hundred yards or take a cab to one of half a dozen houses. His death certainly was tragic—deaths are apt to be tragic—but he was surrounded by friends when he died, and his funeral was not cheap: I happen to have paid for it in conjunction with another friend of his, so I ought to know.

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Continued over leaf, p 239b

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The publication of Oscar Wilde's last book, "De Profundis," has revived interest in the closing scenes of his life, and we to-day print the first of two articles dealing with his last years in Paris from a source which puts their authenticity beyond question.

The one question which inevitably suggested itself to the reader of "De Profundis," was, "What was the effect of his prison reflections on his subsequent life?" The book is full not only of frank admissions of the error of his ways, but of projects for his future activity. "I hope," he wrote, in reply to some criticisms on the relations of art and morals, "to live long enough to produce work of such a character that I shall be able at the end of my days to say, 'Yes, that is just where the artistic life leads a man!'" He mentions in particular two subjects on which he proposed to write, "Christ as the Precursor of the Romantic Movement in Life" and "The Artistic Life Considered in its Relation to Conduct." These resolutions were never carried out, for reasons some of which the writer of the following article indicates.

Oscar Wilde was released from prison in May, 1897. He records in his letters the joy of the thought that at that time "both the lilac and the laburnum will be blooming in the gardens." The closing sentences of the book may be recalled: "Society, as we have constituted it, will have no place for me, has none to offer; but Nature, whose sweet rains fall on unjust and just alike, will have clefts in the rocks where I may hide, and secret valleys in whose silence I may weep undisturbed. She will hang the night with stars so that I may walk abroad in the darkness without stumbling, and send the wind over my footprints so that none may track me to my hurt: she will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole."

He died in November, 1900, three years and a half after his release from Reading Gaol.

Monsieur Joseph Renaud, whose able and carefully-executed translation of Oscar Wilde's "Intentions" has just appeared in Paris, has given a good example of how history is made in his preface to that work. He recounts an obviously imaginary meeting between himself and Oscar Wilde in a bar on the Boulevard des Italiens. He concludes the episode, such as it is, with these words: "Nothing remained of him but his musical voice and his large blue childlike eyes." Oscar Wilde's eyes were curious—long, narrow, and green. Anything less childlike it would be hard to imagine. To the physiognomist they were his most remarkable feature, and redeemed his face from the heaviness that in other respects characterised it. So much for M. Joseph Renaud's powers of observation.

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Having disposed of certain false impressions in regard to various facts of his life and death in Paris, I may turn to what are less easily controlled and examined theories as to that life. Without wishing to be paradoxical, or harshly destructive of the carefully cherished sentiment of poetic justice so dear to the British mind (and the French mind, too, for that matter), I give it as my firm opinion that Oscar Wilde was, on the whole, fairly happy during the last years of his life. He had an extraordinarily buoyant and happy temperament, a splendid sense of humor, and an unrivalled faculty for enjoyment of the present. Of course, he had his bad moments, moments of depression and sense of loss and defeat, but they were not of long duration. It was part of his pose to luxuriate a little in the details of his tragic circumstances. He harrowed the feelings of many of those whom he came across; words of woe poured from his lips; he painted an image of himself, destitute, abandoned, starving even (I have heard him use the word after a very good dinner at Paillard's); as he proceeded he was caught by the pathos of his own words, his beautiful voice trembled with emotion, his eyes swam with tears; and then, suddenly, by a swift, indescribably brilliant, whimsical touch, a swallow-wing flash on the waters of eloquence, the tone changed and rippled with laughter, bringing with it his audience, relieved, delighted, and bubbling into uncontrollable merriment.

He never lost his marvellous gift of talking; after he came out of prison he talked better than before. Every one who really knew him before and after his imprisonment is agreed about that. His conversation was richer, more human, and generally on a higher intellectual level. In French he talked as well as in English; to my own English ear his French used to seem rather labored and his accent too marked, but I am assured by Frenchmen who heard him talk that such was not the effect produced on them.

He explained to me his inability to write, by saying that when he sat down to write he always inevitably began to think of his past life, and that this made him miserable and upset his spirits. As long as he talked and sat in cafés and "watched life," as his phrase was, he was happy, and he had the luck to be a good sleeper, so that only the silence and self-communing necessary to literary work brought him visions of his terrible sufferings in the past and made his old wounds bleed again. My own theory as to his literary sterility at this period is that he was essentially an interpreter of life, and that his existence in Paris was too narrow and too limited to stir him to creation. At his best he reflected life in a magic mirror, but the little corner of life he saw in Paris was not worth reflecting. If he could have been provided with a brilliant "entourage" of sympathetic listeners as of old and taken through a gay season in London, he would have begun to write again. Curiously enough, society was the breath of life to him, and what he felt more than anything else in his "St. Helena" in Paris, as he often told me, was the absence of the smart and pretty women who in the old days sat at his feet! A.

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Lai  
affair Douglas

FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 1905.

## OSCAR WILDE'S LAST YEARS IN PARIS.—II.

The French possess the faculty, very rare in England, of differentiating between a man and his work. They are utterly incapable of judging literary work by the moral character of its author. I have never yet met a Frenchman who was able to comprehend the attitude of the English public towards Oscar Wilde after his release from prison. They were completely mystified by it. An eminent French man of letters said to me one day: "You have a man of genius, he commits crimes, you put him in prison, you destroy his whole life, you take away his fortune, you ruin his health, you kill his mother, his wife, and his brother (*sic*), you refuse to speak to him, you exile him from your country. That is very severe. In France we should never so treat a man of genius, but *enfin ça peut se comprendre*. But not content with that, you taboo his books and his plays, which before you enjoyed and admired, and *pour comble de tout* you are very angry if he goes into a restaurant and orders himself some dinner. *Il faut pourtant qu'il mange ce pauvre homme!*" If I had been representing the British public in an official capacity I should have probably given expression to its views and furnished a sufficient repartee to my voluble French friend by replying: "*Je n'en vois pas la nécessité.*"



He explained to me his inability to write, by saying that when he sat down to write he always inevitably began to think of his past life, and that this made him miserable and upset his spirits. As long as he talked and sat in cafés and "watched life," as his phrase was, he was happy, and he had the luck to be a good sleeper, so that only the silence and self-communing necessary to literary work brought him visions of his terrible sufferings in the past and made his old wounds bleed again. My own theory as to his literary sterility at this period is that he was essentially an interpreter of life, and that his existence in Paris was too narrow and too limited to stir him to creation. At his best he reflected life in a magic mirror, but the little corner of life he saw in Paris was not worth reflecting. If he could have been provided with a brilliant "entourage" of sympathetic listeners as of old and taken through a gay season in London, he would have begun to write again. Curiously enough, society was the breath of life to him, and what he felt more than anything else in his "St. Helena" in Paris, as he often told me, was the absence of the smart and pretty women who in the old days sat at his feet!

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Fortunately for Oscar Wilde, the French took another view of the attitude to adopt towards a man who has offended against society, and who has been punished for it. Never by a word or a hint did they show that they remembered that offence, which, in their view, had been atoned for and wiped out. Oscar Wilde remained for them always *un grand homme, un maître*, a distinguished man, to be treated with deference and respect and, because he had suffered much, with sympathy. It says a great deal for the innate courtesy and chivalry of the French character that a man in Oscar Wilde's position, as well known by sight, as he once remarked to me, as the Eiffel Tower, should have been able to go freely about in theatres, restaurants, and cafés without encountering any kind of hostility or even impertinent curiosity.

It was this benevolent attitude of Paris towards him that enabled him to live and, in a fashion, to enjoy life. His audience was sadly reduced and precarious, and except on some few occasions it was of inferior intellectual calibre; but still he had an audience, and an audience to him was everything. Nor was he altogether deprived of the society of men of his own class and value. Many of the most brilliant young writers in France were proud to sit at his feet and enjoy his brilliant conversation, chief among whom I may mention that accomplished critic and essayist, Monsieur Ernest Lajeunesse, who is the author of what is perhaps the best posthumous notice of him that has been published in France in that excellent magazine, the "*Revue Blanche*"; among older men who kept up their friendship with him, Octave Mirbeau, Moréas, Paul Fort, Henri Bauer, and Jean Lorrain may be mentioned.

In contrast to this attitude taken up towards him by so many distinguished and eminent men, I cannot refrain from recalling the attitude adopted by the general run of English-speaking residents in Paris. For the credit of my country I am glad to be able to put them down mostly as Americans, or at any rate so Americanised by the constant absorption of "*American drinks*" as to be indistinguishable from the genuine article. These gentlemen "*guessed they didn't want Oscar Wilde to be sitting around*" in the bars where they were in the habit of shedding the light of their presence, and from one of these establishments Oscar Wilde was requested by the proprietor to withdraw at the instance of one of our "*American cousins*" who is now serving a term of two years' penal servitude for holding up and robbing a bank!

Oscar Wilde, to do him justice, bore this sort of rebuff with astonishing good temper and sweetness. His sense of humour and his invincible self-esteem kept him from brooding over what to another man might have appeared intolerable, and he certainly possessed the philosophical temperament to a greater extent than any other man I have ever come across. Every now and then one or other of the very few faithful English friends left to him would turn up in Paris and take him to dinner at one of the best restaurants, and anyone who met him on one of these occasions would have found it difficult to believe that he had ever passed through such awful experiences. Whether he was expounding some theory, grave or fantastic, embroidering it the while with flashes of impromptu wit or deepening it with extraordinary and intimate learning (for, as Ernest Lajeunesse says, *he knew everything*), or whether he was "*keeping the table in a roar*" with his delightfully whimsical humour, summer-lightning that flashed and hurt no one, he was equally admirable. To have lived in his lifetime and not to have heard him



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talk is as though one had lived for years at Athens without going to look at the Parthenon.

I wish I could remember one-hundredth part of the good things he said. He was extraordinarily quick in answer and repartee, and anyone who says that his wit was the result of preparation and midnight oil can never have heard him speak. I remember once at dinner a friend of his who had formerly been in the "Blues," pointing out that in the opening stanza of "The Ballad of Reading Jail" he had made a mistake in speaking of the "scarlet coat" of the man who was hanged; he was, as the dedication of the poem says, a private in the "Blues," and his coat would therefore naturally not be scarlet. The lines go—

He did not wear his scarlet coat,  
For blood and wine are red.

"Well, what could I do," said Oscar Wilde plaintively, "I couldn't very well say

He did not wear his azure coat,  
For blood and wine are blue—

could I?"

The last time I saw him was about three months before he died. I took him to dinner at the Grand Café. He was then perfectly well and in the highest spirits. All through dinner he kept me delighted and amused. Only afterwards, just before I left him, he became rather depressed. He actually told me that he didn't think he was going to live long; he had a presentiment, he said. I tried to turn it off into a joke, but he was quite serious. "Somehow," he said, "I don't think I shall live to see the new century." Then a long pause. "If another century began, and I was still alive, it would be really more than the English could stand." And so I left him, never to see him alive again.

Just before he died he came to, after a long period of unconsciousness, and said to a faithful friend who sat by his bedside, "I have had a dreadful dream; I dreamt that I dined with the dead." "My dear Oscar," replied his friend, "I am sure you were the life and soul of the party." "Really, you are sometimes very witty," replied Oscar Wilde, and I believe those are his last recorded words. The jest was admirable and in his own *genre*; it was prompted by ready wit and kindness, and because of it Oscar Wilde went off into his last unconscious phase, which lasted for twelve hours, with a smile on his lips. I cherish a hope that it is also prophetic. Death would have no terrors for me if only I were sure of "dining with the dead."

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"True, Oscar Wilde, who for several years before his conviction had been making at least five thousands pounds a year, found it very hard to live on his rather precarious income after he came out of prison; he was often very 'hard up,' and often did not know where to turn for a coin, but I will undertake to prove to anyone whom it may concern that from the day he left prison till the day of his death his income averaged at least four hundred pounds a year. He had, moreover, far too many devoted friends in Paris ever to be in need of a meal, provided he would take the trouble to walk a few hundred yards or take a cab to one of half a dozen houses. His death certainly was tragic—deaths are apt to be tragic—but he was surrounded by friends when he died, and his funeral was not cheap; I happen to have paid for it in conjunction with another friend of his, so I ought to know.

"He did not become a Roman Catholic before he died. He was, at the instance of a great friend of his, himself a devout Catholic, 'received into the church' a few hours before he died; but he had then been unconscious for many hours, and he died without ever having any idea of the liberty that had been taken with his unconscious body. Whether he would have approved or not of the step taken by his friend is a matter on which I should not like to express a too positive opinion, but it is certain that it would not do him any harm, and apart from all questions of religion and sentiment, it facilitated the arrangements which had to be made for his interment in a Catholic country, in view of the fact that no member of his family took any steps to claim his body or arrange for his funeral.

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MARCH 6,

OSCAR WILDE

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March 2, 1905.

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(Rev. Sir David O.  
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St. James's  
Gazette

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Sir,—If the statements contained in Mr. Oscar Wilde's posthumous work, "De Profundis," are true, as there seems to be no reason to doubt, they certainly demand the serious consideration of the Home Secretary.

To those who are not past feeling, a gang of convicts, with their cropped hair and hideous dress, which would make the best man look abandoned, is a sorry sight indeed. But for a person of education and refinement to be compelled to form one of such a company must be a more terrible punishment even than the loss of liberty or the hardships of a prison life.

If, then, we are to have prisoners—hand-cuffed, and in prison garb—exposed to public view, and mocked in their misery by crowds of grinning Yahoos, we had better return to the more merciful methods of the good old times, when men and women were hanged for larceny.

A. KIPLING COMMON.

8, Gray's-inn-place, Gray's-inn, W.C., March 3, 1905.

MARCH 7,

G. P. O.

OSCAR WILDE'S BOOK.

Sir,—I knew Mr. Oscar Wilde well in the eighties, with the brilliant circle which worshipped him as a demi-god. I do not doubt his authorship of "De Profundis"—the magic of his word-coinage testifies to the authorship—but I have very strong doubts that it was written in prison, and the gentleman who asserts that he received the MSS. before the expiration of the sentence in Reading Gaol ought to procure confirmatory testimony to a proceeding which is contrary to all prison discipline. If there is one thing more strictly carried out than another it is that a prisoner shall not be allowed to handle pen, ink, and paper, except when he writes the letter to his friends, which, until the Prison Act, 1899, was once every three months. Each prisoner can amuse himself with a slate and pencil, but not pen and ink. It is now, and was, absolutely forbidden by the prison authorities.

As was seen in Adolf Beck's case, where nine petitions appear in the Commissioner Report (Blue Book), a prisoner's liberty, fortune, reputation, and life may be at stake, but he must tell his story on two and a half sheets of foolscap. Not a scrap of paper is allowed over the regulation sheets. In a local prison Oscar Wilde could apply for the privilege of a special visit or a letter, and probably would receive it, but as the official visitors of prisoners are simply parts of a solemn farce, and there is no such stereotyped method as giving a prisoner the slightest relief in matters affecting the intellect, I have grave doubts that such facilities were ever given as supplying pen, ink and paper to write "De Profundis."

If it was otherwise the following process would have had to be gone through, either an application to the official prison visitor (possibly Major Arthur Griffiths) for leave to have pen, ink and paper in his cell, which would be refused. By the influence of friends, or the statement of his solicitors that they required special instructions in reference to some evidence, his case, or his property, leave might be granted, but not for journalistic or literary purposes. Had Oscar Wilde's sentence been that of a "first-class misdemeanant" he could have had those privileges, but I never heard that his sentence was mitigated in this respect.



Sir,—If the statements contained in Mr. Oscar Wilde's posthumous work, "De Profundis," are true, as there seems to be no reason to doubt, they certainly demand the serious consideration of the Home Secretary.

To those who are not past feeling, a gang of convicts, with their cropped hair and hideous dress, which would make the best man look abandoned, is a sorry sight indeed. But for a person of education and refinement to be compelled to form one of such a company must be a more terrible punishment even than the loss of liberty or the hardships of a prison life.

If, then, we are to have prisoners—hand-cuffed, and in prison garb—exposed to public view, and mocked in their misery by crowds of grinning Yahoos, we had better return to the more merciful methods of the good old times, when men and women were hanged for larceny.

2019-03-18

Jissen Women's University Library COMMON.

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8, Gray's-inn-place, Gray's-inn, W.C., March 3, 1905.



MARCH 7,

G. P. O.

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Or, he might have applied to the visiting magistrates. In either case there would be a record of such facilities, and the Governor of Reading gaol, the chaplain, and other officials can satisfy the public as well as the Prison Commissioners. If the book was written in prison then it is clear the officials made a distinction between Oscar Wilde and other prisoners.

There is some glamour about books written in prisons. The "Pilgrim's Progress" is a prison book, but Bedford gaol was a pretty easy dungeon. Under the old regime such men as William Cobbett, Orator Hunt, and Richard Carlile, conducted their polemic warfare in prison. The last Chartist leader (the late Mr. Ernest Jones) used to tell how he wrote the "Painter of Florence," and other poems in a London gaol while confined for sedition. It was a common subject of conversation with his young disciples how, as ink was denied in Coldbath-street prison, he made incisions in his arm and wrote his poetry in his own blood. We believed it then, but as we grew older that feeling of doubt made us sceptical. Thomas Cooper's prison rhyme, the "Purgatory of Suicides," and his novel the "Baron's Yule Feast," were written during his two years' imprisonment in Stafford gaol for preaching a "universal strike" as a means of establishing a British Republic.

As "De Profundis" is likely to be a classic, is it not as well to have this question thrashed out at the beginning and not leave it to the twenty-first century?

ANTHONY COLLINS.

### MARCH 8,

#### OSCAR WILDE'S BOOK.

Sir,—My object in publishing "De Profundis" was in order to satisfy what I believed to be legitimate curiosity on the part of those who admired the late Mr. Oscar Wilde as a distinguished dramatist and man of letters. As I expressed in the short preface, I ventured to hope it would give many people a rather different view of the author. These hopes have been partly realised. It is an old platitude that every man has many sides to his character, some of them quite unknown to intimate friends. Even Mr. Oscar Wilde was no exception to the rule. But I do not think his consciousness at a particular moment is a matter for discussion in public. It was in fulfilment of an old promise that I brought a priest to his death-bed. On two former occasions he had contemplated being received—once as a young man, and again on his release from Reading. If Father Cuthbert Dunn, of the Passionists, was perfectly satisfied, I think your Catholic correspondent may feel reassured. This does not prevent "A" from holding to his own view because, as he says, not being a Catholic, an act of faith and what constitutes an act of faith cannot have much meaning for him. He was not present at the time, and it is hardly worth arguing about a matter of opinion.

With regard to the challenge of Mr. Anthony Collins as to whether "De Profundis" was written in prison, I can only refer him to the preface and to my publishers, Messrs. Methuen. It seems I can add nothing to his knowledge of prisons. I may venture to ask what evidence he can produce that he ever formed part of a "lustrous circle" in the early eighties. The name of Collins is unfamiliar to me, but the answer to my question can be left to the twenty-first century as far as it concerns

THE WRITER OF THE PREFACE TO "DE PROFUNDIS."

R. Ross

(his autograph)



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THE WRITER OF THE PREFACE TO "DE PROFUNDIS."



MARCH 9,

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St. James's  
Gazette

OSCAR WILDE.

MR. R. H. SHERARD AND "DE PROFUNDIS."

Sir,—I have just read the articles on Oscar Wilde which appeared in your paper last week and which were written by one who signs "A." I can quite understand that, as a balm to their conscience, the friends who precipitated Wilde into the abyss should wish to persuade themselves and the public that things were really not so bad with him after they had consummated his ruin, and I cannot help feeling that this was the sentiment which dictated the two articles to which I refer. It is human enough and *par tant* contemptible enough, and I should be the very last to challenge any of the statements made by "A." were it not that he writes that of "his self-constituted biographers scarcely one had more than the very slightest acquaintance with him."

Now as far as I know I am the only person who, until "De Profundis" was reviewed, has publicly written in England and America about my friend, and the remark which I quote from "A's" article therefore tends to discredit the things I have written. I therefore wish to say as to my friendship with Wilde that I first made his acquaintance in 1884, in which year I introduced him to Victor Hugo's house; that during the short period that he was at liberty on bail in 1895 I was one of two friends who were constantly with him until the moment when he passed down the steps of the Old Bailey dock into perdition; that I was the only person who visited him in gaol during the first six months of his confinement, once at the ordinary quarterly visit and once with a special permit from the Home Secretary; that during that period I was able to induce Mrs. Wilde to visit him in Wandsworth, and that after her visit she wrote me I was the only friend he wished or cared to see.

As to the facts about his life in Paris after his release, it is quite true that I saw very little of him during the last year of his life. For one thing I was travelling outside of France, and for another Wilde was then surrounded with friends whom I did not care to meet—friends like "A," who can turn his death into a jest and seek an advertisement in the amount of the undertaker's bill. What I have published about his life in Paris was mainly derived from the statements of his landlord, Monsieur Dupoirrier, of the Hotel d'Alsace, rue des Beaux-Arts. Monsieur Dupoirrier has repeatedly told me and others—

1. That he one night found Wilde in the streets of Paris without a domicile. He had been turned out of the hotel he was living in in the rue Marsollier, and had no money for a night's lodging;
2. That Wilde was constantly in his debt and that there is still over a thousand francs owing to him on his account;
3. That Wilde's gold-mounted teeth which he has on sale were left him as slight *dédommagement* by the people who settled Wilde's affairs;
4. That towards the end of his life Wilde was engaged in hack-work for a taskmaster in London who was very irregular in his payments;
5. That Wilde died after weeks of great pain (the Pravaz syringe which was used to allay his agony is also on sale), and that only one other person was present.



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5. That Wilde died after weeks of great pain (the Pravaz syringe which was used to allay his agony) and that only one other person was present.



As to the hotel and the room in which Wilde passed the last months of his life, one does not wish to hurt the feelings of the excellent Monsieur Dupoirrier, and all I will say—for anyone curious in the matter can visit it himself—is that in London his room would be considered dear at a rental of four shillings a week. It is a small gloomy room looking out on a courtyard, furnished with the stained and musty furniture of the cheap hotel garni.

Further, "A" will not deny that André Gide and Ernest Lajeunesse had more than a slight acquaintance with Wilde. Gide relates that he found Wilde in a café once "absolument dénué de ressources," and Ernest Lajeunesse's description of the poet's funeral fully warrants anything that I have written about it. As to Monsieur Renaud, whose acquaintance I made the other day, I have not the least doubt that his description of his meeting with Wilde in the Calisaya is absolutely correct.

And I think that not the least tragic thing in Oscar Wilde's life in Paris was that the cruel contempt of the world forced him to associate once more with the very men whom in his "De Profundis" he had renounced for ever—men who, par acquit de conscience, used to throw him now and then a little silver of their gold, or, when they wanted a diversion, fetched him from his gloomy solitude in the Latin Quarter to entertain them at dinner, be it at Paillard's or at the Grand.

There are at present being hawked round London, advertised in a catalogue of second-hand books, a number of Wilde's letters written during the period between his release from Reading and his death. They are the best contradiction of "A's" complacent representations. Here is the bookseller's description of two of these letters, which I quote from the catalogue:—

"A. L., signed and dated Paris, August 8, 1898, has reference to a MS forwarded of which he has received no acknowledgement, fears he will be turned out of his hotel; indeed the whole letter is a chronicle of misery and despair and nearly hopeless."

"A. L., October 19, 1898, dated Paris, still harping on the same string, namely making incessant appeals for money, has been ill in bed, asking for proofs of his play ('An Ideal Husband'), etc. . . . 17s. 6d."

ROBERT HARBOROUGH SHERARD.

Vernon (Eure), France, March 7, 1905.

#### THE OSCAR WILDE BOOK.

Mr. John Campbell, M.P., will, on Monday, ask the Home Secretary whether he can state what facilities for literary work were accorded to the late Mr. Oscar Wilde during his incarceration in Reading gaol.