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Oscar Wilde  
Scrapbook

Vol. 3



## "INTENTIONS"

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JAN. 11, 1905

## THE SKETCH.

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Guido Ferranti (Herr Konrad Gebhardt).

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[Photograph by H. J. Meissner.]

A SCENE FROM THE FIFTH ACT OF OSCAR WILDE'S TRAGEDY "THE DUCHESS OF PADUA," PRODUCED AT THE GERMAN THEATRE IN HAMBURG: A DUNGEON IN THE PUBLIC PRISON OF PADUA.

"I do not come to ask for pardon now.  
Seeing I know I stand beyond all pardon.  
A very guilty, very wicked woman;  
Enough of that: I have already, Sir,  
Confessed my sin to the Lords' Justices;

"They would not listen to me; and some said  
I did invent a tale to save your life,  
You having trafficked with me; others said  
That woman played with pity as with men;

"Others that grief for my slain Lord and husband  
Had robbed me of my wits: they would not  
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And, when I swore it on the holy book,  
They had the doctor cure me."

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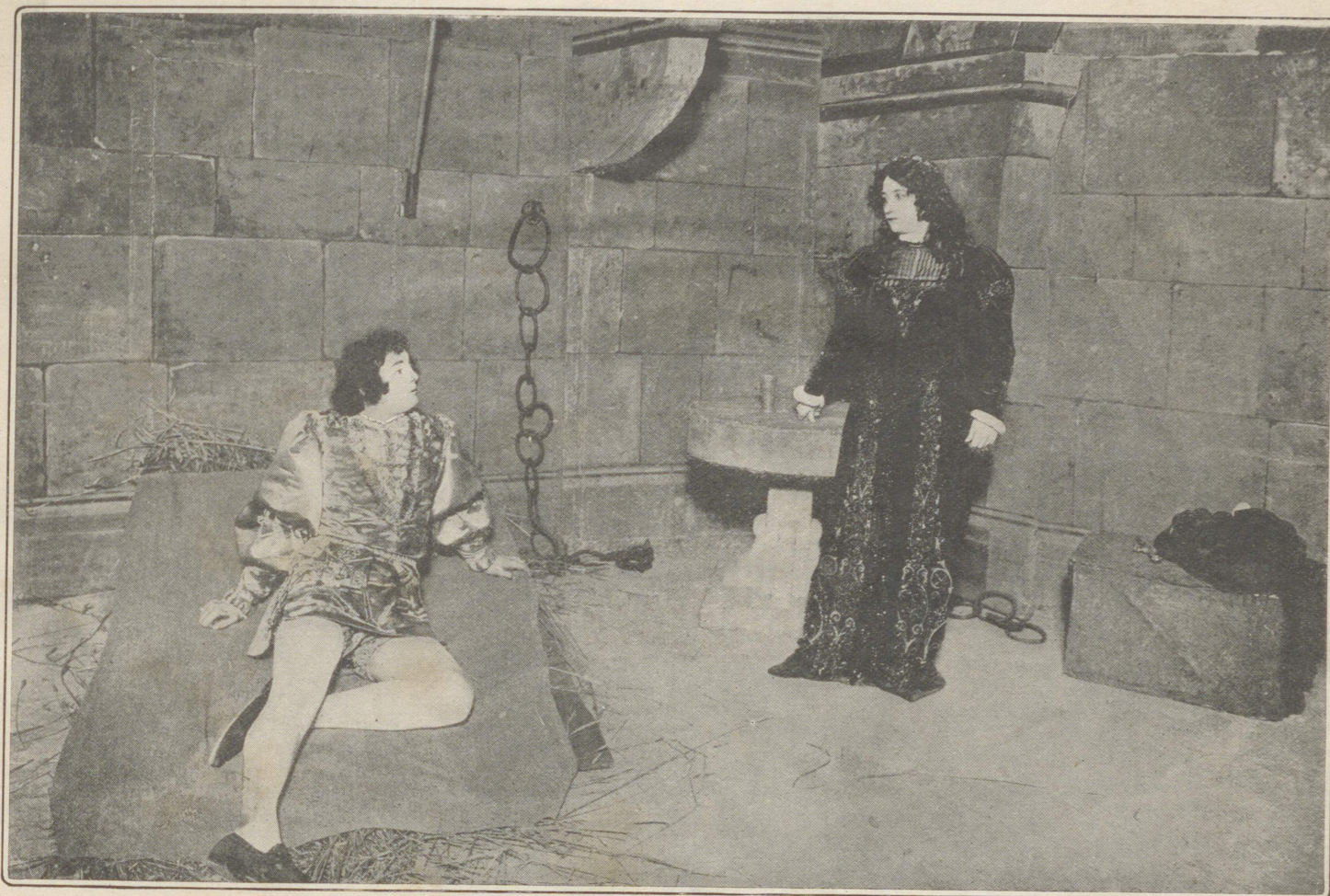


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I did invent a tale to save your life,  
You have to die, said they, said they;  
The child played with me, but as for men;

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Had robbed me of my wits: they would not  
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MAY 10, 1905

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Oct. 31. 1905

Our Vienna Correspondent writes: As I have already reported, Strauss's new opera, "Salome," has been refused by the Censor of the Court theatres on account of the immoral character of Oscar Wilde's libretto. The director of the Opera, Gustav Mahler, who is extremely anxious that Strauss's new opera should not be lost to Vienna, has addressed a petition to the censor asking that permission may be granted to revise the objectionable text-book. It is

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believed that this request will be favourably entertained. The figure of John in the libretto will probably receive another name, and so the character be made to lose its Biblical connection. It is recalled that the "Huguenots" was originally rejected by the Censor and then allowed to appear on the stage in a changed form.

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MAY 11, 1905.

## FORBIDDEN PLAY.

"Salome" Produced at the Bijou Theatre.

## EVADING THE CENSOR.

If only the dazzling and unfortunate Irish genius who wrote "Salome" could have seen it acted as it was acted yesterday at the little Bijou Theatre! One fears, if he had, he would have found that little phrase of his—"the importance of being earnest"—a more delicately true satire than ever upon our sometimes appalling seriousness.

The play was acted by a serious little society—the New Stage Club—who have already paid tribute to another Irishman, Mr. Bernard Shaw. The ban of the censor was, as has been already made known, eluded by the simple device of subscription, instead of payment at the doors.

Quite a brilliant and crowded audience had responded to what seemed an undoubtedly daring and interesting venture. Many seemed to have come out of mere curiosity to see a play the censor had forbidden; some through knowing what really beautiful, passionate, and in its real attitude wholly inoffensive play "Salome" is. In any case there was a considerable fluttering of expectation when the little curtain rose upon the tiny stage. Then seriousness like a blanket came, and the rest was boredom unutterable.

As those who had read the play were aware, this was in no way the fault of the author of "Salome." Its offence in the censor's eyes—and, considering the average audience, he was doubtless wise—was that it represents Salome as making love to John the Baptist, failing to win him to her desires, and asking for his death from Herod, as revenge. This, of course, is not Biblical, but is a fairly widespread tradition.

In the play, as it is written, this love-scene is just a very beautiful piece of sheer passionate speech, full of luxurious Oriental imagery, much of which is taken straight from the "Song of Solomon." It is done very cleverly, very delicately, very gracefully. It is not religious, but it is, in itself, neither blasphemous nor obscene, whatever it may be in the ears of those who hear it. It might possibly, perhaps, be acted grossly; acted naturally and beautifully it would show itself at least art.

## SOLENN ACTING.

In the hands, however, of the New Stage Club it was treated after neither of these methods. It was treated solemnly, dreamily, phlegmatically, as a sort of cross between Maeterlinck and a "mystery" play.

The whole of the play was done in this manner, all save two parts—one, that of Herodias (Miss Salom), which was excellently and vigorously played; the other, that of Herod, which was completely spoiled by an actor who gave what appeared to be a sort of semi-grotesque portrait of one of the late Roman emperors. Even the play itself represents the usurping Idumean as a terrific figure of ignorant strength and lustfulness and power, "walking mightily in his greatness." Some of the most luxurious speeches in the whole play—above all the wonderful description of his jewels—are put into Herod's mouth. Yet he is represented at the Bijou Theatre as a doddering weakling! And even so is desperately serious.

Altogether, beneath this pall of solemnity on the one hand and lack of real exaltation on the other, the play's beauties of speech and thought had practically no chance whatever. Set as it is, too, in one long act of an hour and a half, the lack of natural life and vigour made it more tiresome still. And the shade of Oscar Wilde will doubtless be blamed for it all!

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## DR. STRAUSS IN LONDON.

## Musical Picture of Married Life Not "Funny."

Dr. Richard Strauss arrived in London yesterday morning, his visit being for the purpose of conducting his "Domestic" symphony at Queen's Hall this afternoon. This evening he starts on his return journey to Berlin.

In a chat last night with a "Daily Chronicle" representative, Dr. Strauss denied that this symphony was a joke, as some people have imagined. "The 'Domestic' symphony," he said—speaking in German, for he knows only a few words of English—"is intended to be a musical picture of married life. I know that some people think the work to be a funny presentation of domestic bliss, but I confess that I had no desire to be funny when I was composing it."

"After all, what can be more serious than married life? Marriage is the most earnest thing in life, and the sacred joy of such a union is increased by the advent of a child. It is this bliss that I have endeavoured to illustrate in my music. Home life, nevertheless, has its humours, and these I have also introduced into the work in order to brighten it. But I really want the symphony to be regarded in a serious spirit, and in this spirit it has been played in Germany."

"I heard that the first performance at Queen's Hall went off well under the direction of Mr. Henry J. Wood. By the way, what a fine conductor he is, and what a fine hand he has! This second performance should be even better, for there have been no fewer than seventeen rehearsals."

"This symphony is not really my latest work, for I have just completed an opera. It is a setting of Oscar Wilde's beautiful dramatic poem, 'Salome,' which I believe Sarah Bernhardt performed in Paris some years ago. The poem has not been altered in any way for its purpose as a libretto, beyond, of course, being translated into German. I have arranged for its first performance in Dresden next winter."

## THE SKETCH.

FEB. 1, 1905



LITERARY ST. PETERSBURG: BARONESS RODOSHEFSKY, TRANSLATOR OF "SALOME."

Photograph by Pasetti.

Among the literary and artistic coterie which forms so distinct a circle in St. Petersburg Society, Baroness Rodoshefsky is throned as queen. She lately translated "Salome" from the English.

Some interesting amateur theatricals take place this evening and to-morrow at Leeds, in aid of local charities. They have been organised by Miss Eva Fairfax, niece of Sir Frederick Milner, and Miss Muriel Beckett, the daughter of Mr. Ernest Beckett, M.P. The play chosen is "The Importance of Being Earnest," and included in the cast are Sir Hedworth Williamson, his sister, Mrs. Arthur Meysey-Thompson, and Mr. Guy Dawnay.

A somewhat interesting literary question is raised in the current "Notes and Queries." It is alleged that a German translation of the late Oscar Wilde's posthumous book, "De Profundis," appeared in Berlin before the publication of the work in London, and that it contained passages omitted from the English edition. Messrs. Methuen and Co. will no doubt promptly answer the question whether their edition is really a complete reproduction of the original manuscript, and if any passages were omitted why this was done without explanation.

In your paragraph of Saturday on Sunday wickedness in Kalgoolie, writes a Colonial correspondent, you did not mention that there was in London a few weeks ago a Church of England Bishop from Western Australia begging for money to build a cathedral in this same Kalgoolie—a place that contains more gold and more vice than any other city in Greater Britain, with the possible exception of Johannesburg. Now, is not this putting the cart before the horse? Would it not have been far and away better for that Bishop to stay at home and go in vigorously for open-air preaching to the Sunday pleasure-loving crowds in Kalgoolie?

## "DE PROFUNDIS."

Why the English Version was Curtailed.

## MR. ROSS EXPLAINS.

Mr. Robert Ross, editor of Mr. Oscar Wilde's posthumous work, "De Profundis," writes to "The Daily Chronicle" with regard to the interesting point, to which we called attention on Monday, as to why certain selections published in the German edition of the work were expunged from the subsequently-published English version. Mr. Ross states:—

Sir,—Ragging editors, whether of newspapers or books, is one of the distractions of the silly season, and perhaps you will allow me to occupy space which is not quite so valuable, now as it must be later on, in regard to the publication of Mr. Oscar Wilde's posthumous work. As I have explained elsewhere, neither the German nor the English versions form a complete reproduction of the original manuscript. The arrangements for publication in Germany had already been made when I submitted a type-written selection of those portions (to which I afterwards gave the name of "De Profundis") to Messrs. Methuen.

This was forwarded in ordinary course to their reader, a very distinguished man of letters, who expressed the opinion that certain passages might still be deleted without impairing the value of the book. I saw at once that so far from doing so, it greatly improved the work, which, in any case, could only have been issued as a fragment. The German version also contains some letters written by the author while he was at Reading, to myself. These were never submitted to Messrs. Methuen. They appear in the French version by M. Henri Davray, and in the Italian, Swedish and Hungarian translations.

I shall not doubt be able to make arrangements later on for issuing both the letters and the passages appearing in the German edition, in their original English. It must be remembered that when Dr. Meyerfeldt, the learned and enthusiastic translator of "De Profundis," prevailed on me to bring out the book, he was speaking for a German public, which, rightly or wrongly, had long acclaimed Mr. Oscar Wilde as one of the most distinguished English men of letters in the nineteenth century. Indeed, Germany for the last ten years has accorded him a position which, even in the days of his prosperity, was never yielded to him by the English critics, nor by his own contemporaries. Only a few of our younger writers anticipated foreign opinion, and their views were regarded as illusions of youth.

To the English public, all Russians at heart, and unable to separate the man and the writer, Wilde was the author of some clever plays and epigrams, whose conduct precluded the inclusion of his name, not only in English literature, but in polite conversation. The epigrams, if they were quoted, were ascribed to Mr. Whistler, or boldly appropriated by ebullient novelists. In newspaper reference was made to "the author of 'Lady Windermere's Fan,'" "the unfortunate but talented man of letters," "the playwright who ended his days in prison," &c. &c. I think "The Daily Chronicle" was one of the very few papers which found itself able to print his name without turning as pink as the "Globe" or "Sporting Times." And I remember your paper came in for some very hard criticism because it published the letters on Prison Life in 1897, though of course I do not know whether anonymous readers treated you to their opinion or not.

It was a knowledge of these circumstances and a grave uncertainty as to how "De Profundis" would be received in England that necessitated the caution I exercised. I have been much gratified by the result, and deeply touched not only by the generosity of the reviews, which were fair even when they were hostile, but by the exaggerated tributes to my own small share in a task which was perhaps more delicate than difficult.

ROBERT ROSS  
(Editor of "De Profundis.")

FEBRUARY 23, 1905.

## A TRAGIC COMEDIAN.

DE PROFUNDIS, by Oscar Wilde. London: Methuen. 5s. net—published to-day.

By Edward Thomas.

are, at any rate, two clear shining in the sombre texture of this book, during the last months of his imprisonment Oscar Wilde, the parody of the most artist that ever was—I need not dis- name of the parodist. One thread called commonplace and mournful; is proud and gay; the one is usually em- phorse, the other is perhaps De- pthless Hope; and they are inter- the commonplace is piquant in the man who always avoided the obvious times found the true.

page he speaks of "the paralysing" of prison life; on another he "the most terrible thing about it is it breaks one's heart—hearts are broken—but that it turns one's sorrow." It knows nothing of seed- harvest: "there is only one season, of sorrow." It pours rich sun and all gloomy things, and they bring undredford. "A day in prison on does not weep, is a day on which is hard, not a day on which one's happy." For Wilde there was no of oblivion without death. He had able name:—

agreed that name eternally. I had by word among low people. I had brutes that they might make it brutal, s that they might turn it into a folly.

was in Wandsworth Gaol he longed was filled with rage by improved would commit suicide; or, again, "wear gloom as a king wears

the Man.

ancholy moods departed, only to for sorrow. "Where there is re is holy ground," he says; and he harmony with "the wounded, d great heart of the world." But he n "how to be cheerful and happy," when friends came to see him; he a real desire for life returned:— before me so much to do that I d it as a terrible tragedy if I died is allowed to complete at any rate a I see new developments in art and life, which is a fresh mode of perfection. ow, then, and all that it teaches one, world.

is a fine passage on sorrow as "the motion of which man is capable." times when sorrow seemed to him only truth. Only through sorrow out of man "reach the full stature action." Almost at the end comes on of what, I suppose, was the ment of his life. On November 13, food for half an hour in convict handcuffed, on the centre platform Junction:—

in taken out of the hospital ward moment's notice being given to I possible objects I was the most When people saw me they laughed, as it came up swelled the audience, did exceed their amusement. That se, before they knew who I was. As y had been informed they laughed For half an hour I stood there in the ber rain, surrounded by a jeering year after that was done to me I ay at the same hour and for the same e.

of wit, who never showed himself tourist, that crucifixion scene must near to being too much. That he wonderful; but that he did not die ars after is a proof that the human and longer in the fire than steel. d Solitude.

ok this thread of explicit sorrow ow long it was in the book which on his heart we shall never know, bread was more easily handled, for night from "Intentions" and "The into "De Profundis." It winds a whole with apparent inconsis- e to varying health, unfavourable of composition, and the no doubt task of thinking in the old way, in thout friends, without applause.

## Oscar Wilde's "De Profundis."

Reading the beautiful but miserable book, some things console one, first that he had a friend who both in evil and good stood by him to the last. When the poor wretch, condemned to hang before his time, records with tears how it con- soled him only to have received a brief salute in passing, one thinks better of mankind, and if rewards were ever given to desert, the faithful friend has his—Mr. Cunningham Graham in the "Saturday Review."

## A TRAGIC COMEDIAN.

He had stood "in symbolic relations to the art and culture" of his age. But he had amused himself with being "a flâneur, a dandy, a man of fashion"; he had "ceased to be lord over himself," and allowed pleasure to dominate him. But, he remembered, "to regret one's own experiences is to arrest one's own development." He found humility, which in the artist means "frank acceptance of all experiences." He would free himself from bitterness, resentment, hardness, scorn, and face the world, and "hope to be able to re- create his creative faculty." He was still seek- ing a fresh mode of self-realisation. "There is nothing wrong in what one does," but "some- thing wrong in what one becomes."

The imprisonment was the second turning point in his life. Oxford was the first. He would not treat it as an accident, but as a stage in his development. He says that he had got to make everything that had happened to him good for him; to make degradation of the body into a spiritualising of the soul; to ab- sorb into his nature all that had been done to him. If he had been ashamed of his punish- ment, he says finely, he would have been as bad as society which once it has punished a man shuns him as "one on whom it has in- flicted an irreparable, an irredeemable wrong." Other criminals could disappear; his name was written in lead upon the rocks at every turn; yet—

If I can produce only one beautiful work of art I shall be able to rob malice of its venom, and cowardice of its sneer, and to pluck out the tongue of scorn by the roots.

Let us hope that he succeeded in ways of which we can know nothing, and believe that he was right when he said that he had become a deeper man, though "to propose to be a better man is a piece of unscientific cant."

## New Lights and Old.

But as far as this book carries us in his life, there is no change. *Mens innotata manet, lacrimae voluntur inanes.* He says, indeed, that he is the better for gaining "a right to share in sorrow," but one fears that though that may have been written in his heart's blood, he had to be content with having written it, as is often the fortune of artists. In his new surroundings he was the same. The world should take note of two things: first, that it cannot destroy even a man of wit, that it cannot spoil his style, his wit, his intensity; second, that affections (for the world said he was affected) can be at least as costly and deeply rooted in the heart as respectabilities.

For the man whom society sent to prison with a groan and saluted with indecent laugh- ter, was able to show that society had done him a good service, in that it hoped to ill-treat or even suppress him. People point to Read- ing Gaol and say, "That is where the artistic life leads a man." Well, he says, "People whose desire is solely for self-realisation never know where they are going," but "I hope to live long enough and 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 may even have succeeded in the ingenious, glowing, fantastic study of Christ, which is one of his finest creations.

But if his spirit wanders among such varied scenery that it is here impossible to trace its course, the one strong note is the looking forward to joy. The lilac and laburnum would be blooming when he left prison. He would go to the sea, and gain peace, balance, a less troubled heart. "It seems to me," he says, "that we all look at Nature too much and live with her too little." Society would have no place for him;

but Nature, whose sweet rains fall on unjust and just alike, will have cliffs 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 the great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole.

So the book ends. It was a brave hope. I hope it was sincere, for he was disappointed, and disappointed hope is better than satisfied despair. But the whole book seems to me a *tour de force*, a perishing actor's last ambigu- ous gesture of salutation to the dense tri- umphant world.

## DAILY NEWS.

AUGUST 21, 1905.

Considerable sums have been paid in this country for Oscar Wilde pieces.

## OUT OF THE DEPTHS.

(Published To-day.)

["De Profundis," by Oscar Wilde. (Methuen and Co.) 5s.]

The man who wrote "De Profundis" wrote it in prison; he was an offender who suffered justly for his offences. But if he was a great sinner, he was near to being a great writer, and that is perhaps more to the point than that he purged his wrong- doing in suffering and penitence. For this book, as he himself would have said, is something other than a "cri de cœur"; it is the re-awakening of the artistic spirit, and the response to the need it felt of expression. "For nearly two years," he wrote to the friend, Mr. Robert Ross, to whom he entrusted this manuscript, "I have had within a growing burden of bitterness, of much of which I have now got rid. On the other side of the prison wall there are some poor, black, soot-besmirched trees which are just breaking out into buds of an almost shrill green. I know quite well what they are going through. They are finding expression." That was what, out of the depths of his shame, the ignominy, the hopelessness, the dust and ashes, he was striving to do. He wrote, therefore, an essay, into which crept mentally the note of personal circumstances, for no bar of artistic determination could keep it out, but which is none the less a beautiful essay on the place of sorrow, of tragedy, of pain, of sacrifice, in Art. Much may be forgiven, more may be forgotten, of the man who wrote, in the presence of what he wrote. And if there be any who cannot wholly forget, they may find, sentimentally, a reason for forgiveness in the last words to which his art, and perhaps his emotions, gave utterance. "All trials are trials for one's life, just as all sentences are sentences of death; and perhaps times have I been tried. The first time I left the box to be arrested, the second time to be led back to the house of detention, the third time to pass into a prison for two years. Society, as we have heard, will have no place for me, has none to offer; but Nature, whose sweet rains fall on unjust and just alike, will have cliffs 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 the great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole."

## MARCH 10, 1905.

Kindly ask for METHUEN'S POPULAR NOVELS at your library, especially for MRS. GALER'S BUSI- NESS, by W. P. LIT RIDGE. Ask your bookseller to show you some of the books recently published by Messrs. METHUEN, especially DE PROFUNDIS. All good booksellers keep these books. Messrs. METHUEN will send their new Bulletin and Catalogues to any applicant.

Kindly write to Messrs. METHUEN for a prospectus of their charming "LIBRARY OF DEVOTION" which contains the best editions of devotional books in existence.

## DE PROFUNDIS

By OSCAR WILDE. Crown 8vo, 5s. net.

A third edition is nearly ready.

"Here is a magic of words which would make the book memorable were it the work of an imaginative creator. The actual history of its production ensures for it a permanent position in literature. 'De Profundis' passes un- away to its place amongst those confessions in which men, through great bitterness and the experience of the raw edges of misery and shame, are able to testify to a truth and purpose in it all. The sentence is removed which speaks not only of the walls of the prison, but the frontier of the human soul. One always extraordinarily caudex, expressing his own emotions, here reveals a soul naked in its agonies and terrors. The play has been played. The stage is cleared away. The world of reality, so long ended, as might have been expected, is not yet over. The pressure has passed into sincerity in pain. The result is one of the most tragic and painful confessions ever issued from the aton- ing mind of man."—Daily News.

Among all the most intimate, most moving records of the spirit which have been written, there is nothing so source of tears as this. . . . Never in anything he wrote did Wilde reveal more exquisite phrases than in this. 'De Profundis' reveals the just almost sure that anything else he ever wrote, and it will, I think, be read longer than anything else he ever wrote. As a piece of literature it is worthy to stand beside Bunyan's 'Grace Abound- ing' and the 'Confessions' of Rousseau."—Daily Mail.

## DAILY MAIL.

MARCH 13, 1905.

## "DE PROFUNDIS."

To the Editor of the "Daily Mail."

Sir,—Mr. John Campbell, M.P., having announced a question in the House of Commons to-morrow afternoon, which seems calculated to throw doubt upon this book having been written in prison, perhaps you will kindly allow me to say that I had yesterday an opportunity to see the whole MS., which is written on blue official foolscap bearing the Government prison stamp. The MS. was handed by Mr. Wilde to Mr. Robert Ross on the day of his release, and has remained in Mr. Ross's possession ever since.

The reason why the prisoner was allowed the unusual privilege of writing as much as he pleased was the fear that his mind, accustomed to the constant exercise of writing, might be injured by enforced idleness extending over so long a period as two years.

He was further permitted to take away what he had written because it was felt that to en- force the ordinary rule in so exceptional a case would be harsh and vindictive. Strictly, the MS. of "De Profundis" ought to be in the archives of Reading Gaol; but I think that fair- minded people, even if they are not moved by passing thoughts expressed in phrases of rare beauty, will see no reason to blame the Home Office or the prison authorities for allowing it to be given to the world. H. HAMILTON FIFE.  
Chelsea, March 12.



MAY 11, 1905.

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Photograph by Pasetti.

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Daily Chronicle 23 Jan. 1905

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Sir,—Ragging editors, whether of newspapers or books, is one of the distractions of the silly season, and perhaps you will allow me to occupy space which is not quite so valuable now as it must be later on, in regard to the publication of Mr. Oscar Wilde's posthumous work. As I have explained elsewhere, neither the German nor the English versions form a complete reproduction of the original manuscript. The arrangements for publication in Germany had already been made when I submitted a type-written selection of those portions to which I afterwards gave the name of "De Profundis" to Messrs. Methuen.

This was forwarded in ordinary course to their readers, a very distinguished man of letters, who expressed the opinion that certain passages might still be deleted without impairing the value of the book. I saw at once that so far from doing so, it greatly improved the work, which, in any case, could only have been issued as a fragment. The German version also contains some letters written by the author while he was at Reading, to myself. These were never submitted to Messrs. Methuen. They appear in the French version by M. Henri Davray, and in the Italian, Swedish and Hungarian translations.

I shall no doubt be able to make arrangements later on for issuing both the letters and the passages appearing in the German edition, in their original English. It must be remembered that when Dr. Meyerfeldt, the learned and enthusiastic translator of "De Profundis," prevailed on me to bring out the book, he was speaking for German public, which, rightly or wrongly, had long acclaimed Mr. Oscar Wilde as one of the most distinguished English men of letters in the nineteenth century. Indeed, Germany, for the last ten years has accorded him a position which, even in the days of his prosperity, was never yielded to him by the English critics, nor by his own contemporaries. Only a few of our younger writers anticipated foreign opinion, and their views were regarded as illusions of youth.

To the English public, all Ruskinians at heart, and unable to separate the man and the writer, Wilde was the author of some clever plays and epigrams, whose conduct precluded the inclusion of his name, not only in English literature, but in polite conversation. The epigrams, if they were quoted, were ascribed to Mr. Whistler, or boldly appropriated by ephemeral novelists. In newspaper reference was made to "the author of 'Lady Windermere's Fan,'" the unfortunate but talented man of letters. The epigram which ended his days in prison, "No, no, I think 'The Daily Chronicle' was one of the very few papers which found itself able to print his name without turning as pink as the 'Globe' or 'Sporting Times.' And I remember your paper came in for some very hard criticism because it published the letters on Prison Life in 1897, though of course I do not know whether anonymous readers treated you to their opinion or not."

It was a knowledge of these circumstances and a grave uncertainty as to how "De Profundis" would be received in England that necessitated the caution I exercised. I have been much gratified by the result, and deeply touched not only by the generosity of the reviews, which were fair even when they were hostile, but by the exacting tributes to my own small share in a task which was perhaps more delicate than difficult.

ROBERT ROSS  
(Editor of "De Profundis.")

## A TRAGIC COMEDIAN.

DE PROFUNDIS, by Oscar Wilde. London: Methuen. 6s. net—published to-day.

By Edward Thomas.

There are, at any rate, two clear shining threads in the sombre texture of this book, written during the last months of his imprisonment by Oscar Wilde, the parody of the most perfect artist that ever was—I need not disclose the name of the parodist. One thread is what is called commonplace and mournful; the other is proud and gay; the one is usually named Remorse, the other is perhaps Defiance, perhaps Hope; and they are interwoven. The commonplace is piquant in the work of a man who always avoided the obvious and sometimes found the true.

On one page he speaks of "the paralysing immobility" of prison life; on another he says that "the most terrible thing about it is not that it breaks one's heart—hearts are made to be broken—but that it turns one's heart to stone." It knows nothing of seed-time and harvest: "there is only one season, the season of sorrow." It pours rich sun and rain upon all gloomy things, and they bring forth a hundredfold. "A day in prison on which one does not weep, is a day on which one's heart is hard, not a day on which one's heart is happy." For Wilde there was no possibility of oblivion without death. He had borne a noble name:—

I had disgraced that name eternally. I had made it a low by-word among low people. I had given it to brutes that they might make it brutal, and to fools that they might turn it into a synonym for folly.

When he was in Wandsworth Gaol he longed to die; he was filled with rage by improved health; he would commit suicide; or, again, he would "wear gloom as a king wears purple."

## Moods and the Man.

The melancholy moods departed, only to make way for sorrow. "Where there is sorrow there is holy ground," he says; and he came into harmony with "the wounded, broken, and great heart of the world." But he had to learn "how to be cheerful and happy," especially when friends came to see him; he succeeded; a real desire for life returned:—

There is before me so much to do that I would regard it as a terrible tragedy if I died before I was allowed to complete at any rate a little of it. I see new developments in art and life, each one of which is a fresh mode of perfection. Sorrow, then, and all that it teaches one, is my new world.

Then follows a fine passage on sorrow as "the supreme emotion of which man is capable." There were times when sorrow seemed to him to be "the only truth." Only through sorrow could the soul of man "reach the full stature of its perfection." Almost at the end comes a description of what, I suppose, was the supreme moment of his life. On November 13, 1895, he stood for half an hour in convict dress, and handcuffed, on the centre platform of Clapham Junction:—

I had been taken out of the hospital ward without a moment's notice being given to me. Of all possible objects I was the most grotesque. When people saw me they laughed. Each train as it came up swelled the audience. Nothing could exceed their amusement. That was, of course, before they knew who I was. As soon as they had been informed they laughed all more. For half an hour I stood there in the grey November rain, surrounded by a jeering mob. For a year after that was done to me I wept every day at the same hour and for the same space of time.

For a man of wit, who never showed himself to be a humourist, that crucifixion scene must have come near to being too much. That he survived is wonderful; but that he did not die until five years after is a proof that the human heart can stand longer in the fire than steel.

## Sorrow and Solitude.

In the book this thread of explicit sorrow is short; how long it was in the book which was written on his heart we shall never know. The other thread was more easily handled, for it came straight from "Intentions" and "The Soul of Man" into "De Profundis." It winds through the whole with apparent inconsistencies, due to varying health, unfavourable conditions of composition, and the no doubt tremendous task of thinking in the old way, in solitude, without friends, without applause.

## Oscar Wilde's "De Profundis."

Reading the beautiful but miserable book, some things come to one, first that he had a friend who both in evil and good repute stood by him to the last. When the poor wretch, condemned to hell before his time, records with tears how it consoled him only to have received a brief salute in passing, one thinks better of mankind, and if there were ever given to desert, the faithful friend has his—Mr. Cunningham Graham in the "Saturday Review."

FEBRUARY 23, 1905.

## OUT OF THE DEPTHS.

(Published To-day.)

["De Profundis," by Oscar Wilde. (Methuen and Co.) 5s.]

The man who wrote "De Profundis" wrote it in prison; he was an offender who suffered justly for his offences. But if he was a great sinner, he was near to being a great writer, and that is perhaps more to the point than that he purged his wrongdoing in suffering and penitence. For this book, as he himself would have said, is something other than a "cri de cœur"; it is the re-awakening of the artistic spirit, and the response to the need it felt of expression. "For nearly two years," he wrote to the friend, Mr. Robert Ross, to whom he entrusted this manuscript, "I have had within a growing burden of bitterness, of much of which I have now got rid. On the other side of the prison wall there are some poor, black, soot-besmirched trees which are just breaking out into buds of an almost shrill green. I know quite well what they are going through. They are finding expression." That was what, out of the depths of his shame, the ignominy, the hopelessness, the dust and ashes, he was striving to do. He wrote, therefore, an essay into which crept mentally the note of personal circumstances, for no bar of artistic determination could keep it out, but which is none the less a beautiful essay on the place of sorrow, of tragedy, of pain, of sacrifice, in Art. Much may be forgiven, more may be forgotten, of the man who wrote, in the presence of what he wrote. And if there be any who cannot wholly forget, they may find, sentimentally, a reason for forgiveness in the last words to which his art, and perhaps his emotions, gave utterance. "All trials are trials for one's life, just as all sentences are sentences of death; and these times have I been tried. The first time I left the box to be arrested, the second time to be led back to the house of detention, the third time to pass into a prison for two years. Society, as we have constituted it, will have no place for me, I have nothing 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 the great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole."

If I can produce only one beautiful work of art I shall be able to rob malice of its venom, and cowardice of its sneer, and to pluck out the tongue of scorn by the roots.

Let us hope that he succeeded in ways of which we can know nothing, and believe that he was right when he said that he had become a deeper man, though "to propose to be a better man is a piece of unscientific cant."

## New Lights and Old.

But as far as this book carries us in his life, there is no change. *Mens innotata manet, lacrima voluntur inanes.* He says, indeed, that he is the better for gaining "a right to share in sorrow," but one fears that though that may have been written in his heart's blood, he had to be content with having written it, as is often the fortune of artists. In his new surroundings he was the same. The world should take note of two things: first, that it cannot destroy even a man of wit, that it cannot spoil his style, his wit, his intensity; second, that affections (for the world said he was affected) can be at least as costly and deeply rooted in the heart as respectabilities.

For the man whom society sent to prison with a groan and saluted with indecent laughter, was able to show that society had done him a good service, when it hoped to ill-treat or even suppress him. People point to Reading Gaol and say, "That is where the artistic life leads a man." Well, he says, "People whose desire is solely for self-realisation never know where they are going," but "I hope to live long enough and 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 may even have succeeded in the ingenious, glowing, fantastic study of Christ, which is one of his finest creations.

But if his spirit winds among such varied scenery that it is here impossible to trace its course, the one strong note is the looking forward to joy. The lilac and laburnum would be blooming when he left prison. He would go to the sea, and gain peace, balance, a less troubled heart. "It seems to me," he says, "that we all look at Nature too much and live with her too little." Society would have no place for him;

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 the great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole.

So the book ends. It was a brave hope. I hope it was sincere, for he was disappointed, and disappointed hope is better than satisfied despair. But the whole book seems to me a *tour de force*, a perishing actor's last ambiguous gesture of salutation to the dense triumphant world.

## DAILY NEWS, AUGUST 21, 1905.

Considerable sums have been paid in this country for Oscar Wilde pieces.

## DAILY MAIL.

MARCH 13, 1905.

## "DE PROFUNDIS."

To the Editor of the "Daily Mail."

Sir,—Mr. John Campbell, M.P., having announced a question in the House of Commons to-morrow afternoon, which seems calculated to throw doubt upon this book having been written in prison, perhaps you will kindly allow me to say that I had yesterday an opportunity to see the whole MS., which is written on blue official foolscap bearing the Government prison stamp.

The MS. was handed by Mr. Wilde to Mr. Robert Ross on the day of his release, and has remained in Mr. Ross's possession ever since.

The reason why the prisoner was allowed the unusual privilege of writing as much as he pleased was the fear that his mind, accustomed to the constant exercise of writing, might be injured by enforced idleness extending over so long a period as two years.

He was further permitted to take away what he had written because it was felt that to enforce the ordinary rule in so exceptional a case would be harsh and vindictive. Strictly, the MS. of "De Profundis" ought to be in the archives of Reading Gaol; but I think that fair-minded people, even if they are not moved by ingenious thoughts expressed in phrases of rare beauty, will see no reason to blame the Home Office or the prison authorities for allowing it to be given to the world. H. HAMILTON FIFE.  
Chelsea, March 12.



MAY 11, 1905.

## FORBIDDEN PLAY.

“Salome” Produced at the  
Bijou Theatre.

## EVADING THE CENSOR.

If only the dazzling and unfortunate Irish genius who wrote “Salome” could have seen it acted as it was acted yesterday at the little Bijou Theatre! One fears, if he had, he would have found that little phrase of his—“the importance of being earnest”—a more delicately true satire than ever upon our sometimes appalling seriousness.

The play was acted by a serious little society—the New Stage Club—who have already paid tribute to another Irishman, Mr. Bernard Shaw. The ban of the censor was, as has been already made known, eluded by the simple device of subscription, instead of payment at the doors.

Quite a brilliant and crowded audience had responded to what seemed an undoubtedly daring and interesting venture. Many seemed to have come out of mere curiosity to see a play the censor had forbidden; some through knowing what a really beautiful, passionate, and in its real altitude wholly inoffensive play “Salome” is. In any case there was a considerable fluttering of expectation when the little curtain rose upon the tiny stage. Then seriousness like a blanket came, and the rest was boredom unutterable.

As those who had read the play were aware, this was in no way the fault of the author of “Salome.” Its offence in the censor’s eyes—and, considering the average audience, he was doubtless wise—was that it represents Salome as making love to John the Baptist, failing to win him to her desires, and asking for his death from Herod, as revenge. This, of course, is not Biblical, but is a fairly widespread tradition.

In the play, as it is written, this love-scene is just a very beautiful piece of sheer passionate speech, full of luxurious Oriental imagery, much of which is taken straight from the “Song of Solomon.” It is done very cleverly; very delicately, very gracefully. It is not religious, but it is, in itself, neither blasphemous nor obscene, whatever it may be in the ears of those who hear it. It might possibly, perhaps, be acted grossly; acted naturally and beautifully it would show itself at least art.

## SOLEMN ACTING.

In the hands, however, of the New Stage Club it was treated after neither of these methods. It was treated solemnly, dreamily, phlegmatically, as a sort of cross between Maeterlinck and a “mystery” play.

The whole of the play was done in this manner, all save two parts—one, that of Herodias (Miss Salom), which was excellently and vigorously played; the other, that of Herod, which was completely spoiled by an actor who gave what appeared to be a sort of semi-grotesque portrait of one of the late Roman emperors. Even the play itself represents the usurping Idumean as a terrific figure of ignorant strength and lustfulness and power “walking mightily in his greatness.” Some of the most luxurious speeches in the whole play—above all the wonderful description of his jewels—are put into Herod’s mouth. Yet he is represented at the Bijou Theatre as a doddering weakling! And even so is desperately serious.

Altogether, beneath this pall of solemnity on the one hand and lack of real exaltation on the other, the play’s beauties of speech and thought had practically no chance whatever. Set as it is, too, in one long act of an hour and a half, the result is a lifeless and tiresome made it more tiresome still. And the shade of Oscar Wilde will doubtless be blamed for it all!



APRIL 1, 1905.

The composer, Dr. Richard Strauss, who has arrived in London, says his "Domestic" Symphony was intended as a serious musical picture of married life. He has completed an opera on "Salome."

## DR. STRAUSS IN LONDON.

### Musical Picture of Married Life Not "Funny."

Dr. Richard Strauss arrived in London yesterday morning, his visit being for the purpose of conducting his "Domestic" symphony at Queen's Hall this afternoon. This evening he starts on his return journey to Berlin.

In a chat last night with a "Daily Chronicle" representative, Dr. Strauss denied that this symphony was a joke, as some people have imagined.

"The 'Domestic' symphony," he said—speaking in German, for he knows only a few words of English—"is intended to be a musical picture of married life. I know that some people think the work to be a funny presentation of domestic bliss, but I confess that I had no desire to be funny when I was composing it.

"After all, what can be more serious than married life? Marriage is the most earnest thing in life, and the sacred joy of such a union is increased by the advent of a child. It is this bliss that I have endeavoured to illustrate in my music. Home life, nevertheless, has its humours, and these I have also introduced into the work in order to brighten it. But I really want the symphony to be regarded in a serious spirit, and in this spirit it has been played in Germany.

"I heard that the first performance at Queen's Hall went off well under the direction of Mr. Henry J. Wood. By the way, what a fine conductor he is, and what a fine band he has! This second performance should be even better, for there have been no fewer than seventeen rehearsals.

"This symphony is not really my latest work, for I have just completed an opera. It is a setting of Oscar Wilde's beautiful dramatic poem, 'Salomé,' which I believe Sarah Bernhardt performed in Paris some years ago. The poem has not been altered in any way for its purpose as a libretto, because it was being translated into German. I have arranged for its first performance in Dresden next winter.





LITERARY ST. PETERSBURG: BARONESS  
RODOSHEFSKY, TRANSLATOR OF "SALOME."

*Photograph by Pasetti.*

Among the literary and artistic  
coterie which forms so distinct a circle in  
St. Petersburg Society, Baroness Rodoshefsky  
is throned as queen. She lately translated  
"Salome" from the English.



Daily Chronicle 23 Jan. 1905.

Some interesting amateur theatricals take place this evening and to-morrow at Leeds, in aid of local charities. They have been organised by Miss Eva Fairfax, niece of Sir Frederick Milner, and Miss Muriel Beckett, the daughter of Mr. Ernest Beckett, M.P. The play chosen is "The Importance of Being Earnest," and included in the cast are Sir Hedworth Williamson, his sister, Mrs. Arthur Heybey-Thompson, and Mr. Guy Dawnay.

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A somewhat interesting literary question is raised in the current "Notes and Queries." It is alleged that a German translation of the late Oscar Wilde's posthumous book, "De Profundis," appeared in Berlin before the publication of the work in London, and that it contained passages omitted from the English edition. Messrs. Methuen and Co. will no doubt promptly answer the question whether their edition is really a complete reproduction of the original manuscript, and if any passages were omitted why this was done without explanation.

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In your paragraph of Saturday on Sunday wickedness in Kalgoorlie, writes a Colonial correspondent, you did not mention that there was in London a few weeks ago a Church of England Bishop from Western Australia begging for money to build a cathedral in this same Kalgoorlie—a place that contains more gold and more vice than any other city in Greater Britain, with the possible exception of Johannesburg. Now, is not this putting the cart before the horse? Would it not have been far and away better for that Bishop to stay at home and go in vigorously for open-air preaching to the Sunday pleasure-loving crowds in Kalgoorlie?

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## "DE PROFUNDIS."

### Why the English Version was Curtailed.

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J. ROSS

(Editor of "De Profundis.")

Aug 28

1905

Aug 30

1905



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#### Moods and the Man.

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Then follows a fine passage on sorrow as "the supreme emotion of which man is capable." There were times when sorrow seemed to him to be "the only truth." Only through sorrow could the soul of man "reach the full stature of its perfection." Almost at the end comes a description of what, I suppose, was the supreme moment of his life. On November 13, 1895, he stood for half an hour in convict dress, and handcuffed, on the centre platform of Clapham Junction:—

I had been taken out of the hospital ward without a moment's notice being given to me. Of all possible objects I was the most grotesque. When people saw me they laughed. Each train as it came up swelled the audience. Nothing could exceed their amusement. That was, of course, before they knew who I was. As soon as they had been informed they laughed still more. For half an hour I stood there in the grey November rain, surrounded by a jeering mob. For a year after that was done to me I wept every day at the same hour and for the same space of time.

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He had stood "in symbolic relations to the art and culture" of his age. But he had amused himself with being "a flâneur, a dandy, a man of fashion"; he had "ceased to be lord over himself," and allowed pleasure to dominate him. But, he remembered, "to regret one's own experiences is to arrest one's own development." He found humility, which in the artist means "frank acceptance of all experiences." He would free himself from bitterness, resentment, hardness, scorn, and face the world, and "hope to be able to recreate his creative faculty." He was still seeking a fresh mode of self-realisation. "There is nothing wrong in what one does," but "something wrong in what one becomes."

The imprisonment was the second turning point in his life. Oxford was the first. He would not treat it as an accident, but as a stage in his development. He says that he had got to make everything that had happened to him good for him; to make degradation of the body into a spiritualising of the soul; to absorb into his nature all that had been done to him. If he had been ashamed of his punishment, he says finely, he would have been as bad as society which once it has punished a man shuns him as "one on whom it has inflicted an irreparable, an irredeemable wrong." Other criminals could disappear; his name was written in lead upon the rocks at every turn; yet—

If I can produce only one beautiful work of art I shall be able to rob malice of its venom, and cowardice of its sneer, and to pluck out the tongue of scorn by the roots.

Let us hope that he succeeded in ways of which we can know nothing, and believe that he was right when he said that he had become a deeper man, though "to propose to be a better man is a piece of unscientific cant."

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But as far as this book carries us in his life, there is no change. *Mens in mota manet, lacrimæ voluntur inanes.* He says, indeed that he is the better for gaining "a right to share in sorrow," but one fears that though that may have been written in his heart's blood, he had to be content with having written it, as is often the fortune of artists. In his new surroundings he was the same. The world should take note of two things: first, that it cannot destroy even a man of wit, that it cannot spoil his style, his wit, his intensity; second, that affections (for the world said he was affected) can be at least as costly and deeply rooted in the heart as respectabilities.

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But if his spirit winds among such varied scenery that it is here impossible to trace its course, the one strong note is the looking forward to joy. The lilac and laburnum would be blooming when he left prison. He would go to the sea, and gain peace, balance, a less troubled heart. "It seems to me," he says, "that we all look at Nature too much and live with her too little." Society would have no place for him;

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.

So the book ends. It was a brave hope. I hope it was sincere, for he was disappointed, and disappointed hope is better than satisfied despair. But the whole book seems to me a *tour de force*, a perishing actor's last ambiguous gesture of salutation to the dense tri-



# THE DAILY GRAPHIC,

## OUT OF THE DEPTHS.

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(Published To-day.)

["De Profundis," by Oscar Wilde. (Methuen and Co.) 5s.]

The man who wrote "De Profundis" wrote it in prison; he was an offender who suffered justly for his offences. But if he was a great sinner, he was near to being a great writer, and that is perhaps more to the point than that he purged his wrongdoing in suffering and penitence. For this book, as he himself would have said, is something other than a "cri de cœur"; it is the re-awakening of the artistic spirit, and the response to the need it felt of expression. "For nearly two years," he wrote to the friend, Mr. Robert Ross, to whom he entrusted this manuscript, "I have had within a growing burden of bitterness, of much of which I have now got rid. On the other side of the prison wall there are some poor, black, soot-besmirched trees which are just breaking out into buds of an almost shrill green. I know quite well what they are going through. They are finding expression." That was what, out of the depths of his shame, the ignominy, the hopelessness, the dust and ashes, he was striving to do. He wrote, therefore, an essay, into which crept mentally the note of personal circumstances, for no bar of artistic determination could keep it out, but which is none the less a beautiful essay on the place of sorrow, of tragedy, of pain, of sacrifice, in Art. Much may be forgiven, more may be forgotten, of the man who wrote, in the presence of what he wrote. And if there be any who cannot wholly forget, they may find, sentimentally, a reason for forgiveness in the last words to which his art, and perhaps his emotions, gave utterance. "All trials are trials for one's life, just as all sentences are sentences of death; and three times have I been tried. The first time I left the box to be arrested, the second time to be led back to the house of detention, the third time to pass into a prison for two years. 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 I may not feel the weight of my hurt; she will cleanse me in the great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole."



# MARCH 10, 1905.

Kindly ask for METHUEN'S POPULAR NOVELS at your library, especially for MRS. GALER'S BUSINESS, by W. PETT RIDGE. Ask your bookseller to show you some of the books recently published by Messrs. METHUEN, especially DE PROFUNDIS. All good booksellers keep these books. Messrs. METHUEN will send their new Bulletin and Catalogues to any applicant.

Kindly write to Messrs. METHUEN for a prospectus of their charming "LIBRARY OF DEVOTION" which contains the best editions of devotional books in existence.

## DE PROFUNDIS

By OSCAR WILDE.

Crown 8vo, 5s. net.

*A third edition is nearly ready.*

"Here is a magic of words which would make the book memorable were it the work of an imaginative creation. The actual history of its production ensures for it a permanent position in literature. 'De Profundis' passes immediately to its place amongst those confessions in which men, through great bitterness and the experience of the raw edges of misery and shame, are able to testify to a meaning and purpose in it all. . . . The sentinel is removed which guards not only the walls of the prison, but the frontier of the human soul. One always extraordinarily candid, expressing his own emotions, here reveals a soul naked in its agonies and terrors. The play has been played. The stage is cleared away. The world of reality, so long ended, at length has compelled attention. Sincerity in pleasure has passed into sincerity in pain. The result is one of the most tragic and pitiful confessions ever issued from the astonished mind of man."—Daily News.

"Among all the most intimate, most moving records of the growth of a soul, I know none that lies nearer to the source of tears than this. . . . Never in anything he wrote did Wilde frame more exquisite phrases than we find here. 'De Profundis' is a work of art, more than anything else he ever wrote, and it will, I think, be read longer than anything else he ever wrote. As a piece of literature it is worthy to stand beside Bunyan's 'Grace Abounding' and the 'Confessions' of Rousseau."—Daily Mail.

Jissen 2019-03-17 University Library



Oscar Wilde's "De Profundis."

Reading the beautiful but miserable book, some things console one, first that he had a friend who both in evil and good repute stood by him to the last. When the poor wretch, condemned to hell before his time, records with tears how it consoled him only to have received a brief salute in passing, one thinks better of mankind, and if rewards were ever given to desert, the friend has his.—Mr. Cunninghame Graham in the "Saturday Review."

DAILY NEWS,  
AUGUST 21, 1905.

2019-03-17 Jissen Women's University Library 299  
country for Oscar Wilde pieces;



ing and the "Confessions" of Rousseau." —Daily Mail.

# DAILY MAIL.

MARCH 13, 1905.

## "DE PROFUNDIS."

To the Editor of the "Daily Mail."

Sir,—Mr. John Campbell, M.P., having announced a question in the House of Commons to-morrow afternoon which seems calculated to throw doubt upon this book having been written in prison, perhaps you will kindly allow me to say that I had yesterday an opportunity to see the whole MS., which is written on blue official foolscap bearing the Government prison stamp.

The MS. was handed by Mr. Wilde to Mr. Robert Ross on the day of his release, and has remained in Mr. Ross's possession ever since.

The reason why the prisoner was allowed the unusual privilege of writing as much as he pleased was the fear that his mind, accustomed to the constant exercise of writing, might be injured by enforced idleness extending over so long a period as two years.

He was further permitted to take away what he had written because it was felt that to enforce the ordinary rule in so exceptional a case would be harsh and vindictive. Strictly, the MS. of "De Profundis" ought to be in the archives of Reading Gaol; but I think that fair-minded people, even if they are not moved by ingenious thoughts expressed in phrases of rare beauty, will see no reason to blame the Home Office or the Prison Commissioners for allowing it to be given to the world.

H. HAMILTON FYFE.

Chelsea, March 12.



## "OUT OF THE DEPTHS"

"De Profundis," from the depths of Reading Gaol, comes the last book of Oscar Wilde, the man who was. They act his plays to-day, and laughing audiences wonder at the wit that cannot find its peer among living dramatists. The construction of "Lady Windermere's Fan," the humour of "The Importance of Being Earnest" still excite our admiration. The tarnished name of their author was fading into the haze of which good Father Time discreetly covers both honour and shame, both success and failure. Almost does it seem a matter of regret that his ghost should be raised once more.

Yet here "De Profundis," the book, is; and those who believe that "the proper study of mankind is man" can read and analyse, finding therein genius, eccentricity, apt phrases, emotional cloud-bursts of sorrow, and perhaps no little artificiality. Such a book indeed as might have been expected from Wilde in Reading Gaol.

Mr. Robert Ross explains the publication. The book was placed in his possession when the author was released. It was the only work that Wilde wrote in prison, and the last in prose that he ever penned. The famous "Ballad of Reading Gaol" was composed after he had regained his liberty.

It is a book of reflections and mental analysis without any definite plan. He deals with his development under the prison rules, and explains the mood in which he intends to face the world. He knows that on the day of his release he will be merely passing from one prison to another, "and there are times when the whole world seems to me no larger than my cell and as full of terrors for me. Still," he continues, "I believe that at the beginning God made a world for each separate man, and in that world which is within us one should seek to live." Self-destruction he considered and threw aside.

Prison life he found to make for the realisation of things as they are. "That is why it turns one to stone," he explains. "It is the people outside who are deceived by the illusions of a life in constant motion. They revolve with life and contribute to its unreality. We who are immobile both see and know."

## Stimulating Hope.

Hope, that blessing of the gods upon suffering humanity, was not denied even to him. Remembering his deserted death-bed, it stirs an infinite pity to read: "On the other side of the prison wall there are some poor black, soot-besmirched trees which are just breaking out into buds of an almost tender green. I know quite well what they are going through. They are finding expression." He hoped to do great things. "I believe I am to have enough to live on for about eighteen months at any rate, so that if I may not write beautiful books I may at least read beautiful books; and what joy can be greater? After that I hope to be able to recreate my creative faculty."

## The Daily Mail

## OUT OF THE DEPTHS.\*

## A PRISON JOURNAL.

By H. HAMILTON FYFE.

Among all the most intimate, most moving records of the growth of a soul, I know none that lies nearer to the source of tears than this.

When Oscar Wilde was sent to prison the calamity of a life so rich in promises lay like a dull weight upon the mind. When he died, miserably poor and suffering grievously, in Paris, a seamed and sordid curtain seemed to fall upon the tragedy of his wasted years. No one, after reading these pages which he wrote in his prison—the only pages he did write there—can ever think of him quite in that way again.

They show us that in those two years through which he ate the bread of affliction, much was made plain to him that had been hidden before. Sorrow taught him lessons that could never be learned of Pleasure. In his agony and despair of mind he chanced upon the key to the mystery of Pain. The chart of the ocean of life lay spread before him, and in his narrow cell he traced out the course he must steer for as long as his voyage lasted.

## THE COMING OF HUMILITY.

At first he bitterly resented his punishment:

I longed to die. . . . I determined to commit suicide on the very day on which I left prison. After a time that evil mood passed away, and I made up my mind to live, but to wear gloom as a king wears purple: never to smile again; to turn whatever house I entered into a house of mourning; to make my friends walk slowly in sadness with me; to teach them that melancholy is the true secret of life.

Of his life in prison he writes: "For us there is only one season, the season of sorrow. The very sun and moon seem taken from us. Outside, the day may be blue and gold, but the light that creeps down through the thick muffled glass of the small iron-barred window beneath which one sits is grey and haggard. It is always twilight in one's cell, as it is always twilight in one's heart."

Now and again he revels in phrases after his own cynical fashion. He talks of the "mechanical people to whom life is a shrewd speculation." "They start with the ideal desire of being the parish beadle, and in whatever sphere they are placed they succeed in being the parish beadle and no more. A man whose desire is to be something separate from himself, to be a member of Parliament, or a successful grocer, or a prominent solicitor, or a judge, or something equally tedious, invariably succeeds in being what he wants to be. That is his punishment. Those who want a make have to wear it."

## Dreadful Experience.

Of all his sufferings one stands out most prominently in his miserable recollection. Convicts are the "zany of sorrow," the clowns whose hearts are broken. You can see it in their dress, especially designed to appeal to the sense of humour. When he was removed from London to Reading—"I had to stand on the centre platform of Clapham Junction in convict dress and handcuffed, for the world to look at. When people saw me they laughed. Each train as it came up swelled the audience. Nothing could exceed their amusement. That was, of course, before they knew who I was. As soon as they had been informed they laughed still more. For half an hour I stood there, in the grey November rain, surrounded by a peering mob."

So much, then, for this strange work, partly defence, partly appeal, partly a posture in prose. It will harm no one to read it, for the Nemesis of wrong-doing shadows every page.

One last quotation let me make from the words with which it ends. A curiously pathetic picture can imagination form of this broken genius, bankrupt, dishonoured, his children taken from him, his name a thing of scorn, sitting in his base prison cell, the door of which he has lately scrubbed, and writing thus of his future: "Society will have no place for me; but nature, whose sweet rains fall on the unjust and just alike, will have clefts in the rock 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."

Whether these imaginings ring false or true, whether they mirror the artificiality of self-deception or are the prayer of a contrite heart, the scene in the prison cell remains equally surprising.

B. FLETCHER ROBINSON.

"De Profundis." By Oscar Wilde. Methuen. 5s.

All the more does this tend to convey an impression of theatricality from the fact that Wilde was never drawn towards the faith which makes "the body of the Lord" its holiest bond and sacrament of union. Yet, read this haunting page of confession, and say if a man capable of setting down these searing, scorching sentences could possibly be insincere either with himself or with those (not originally the public) for whom he wrote.

Terrible as was what the world did to me, what I did to myself was far more terrible still. . . . The gods had given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. I amused myself with being a flâneur, a dandy, a man of fashion. I surrounded myself with the smaller natures and the meaner minds. . . . Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensation. . . . I ended in horrible disgrace. There is only one thing for me now, absolute humility.

## ALL THINGS FOR GOOD.

From here the next step was natural. "The meek shall inherit the earth," Christ said. Not till we have stripped off pride and all the unlovely qualities which pride binds upon us can we realise

How fair a place to fill  
Is left to each man still;

can we understand that all the events of life may make for the good of character, if only they are looked at aright.

I have got to make everything that has happened to me good for me. The plank bed, the loathsome food, the hard ropes shredded into oakum till one's finger-tips grow dull with pain, the menial offices with which each day begins and finishes. . . . each and all of these things I have to transform into a spiritual experience. There is not a single degradation of the body which I must not try and make into a spiritualising of the soul.

I could almost wish the book ended there upon that note of sorrowful simplicity. We should miss many arresting thoughts, many beautiful forms of words, for never in anything he wrote did Wilde frame more exquisite phrases than we find here. Yet we should feel more certain that he had won the true peace which passeth all understanding. The pity and the terror that cleanse our hearts would be unalloyed by any doubting whether his feet were indeed set at last upon the firm way.

The more he talks about his emotions the less real they seem. The reason of that is plain. He fancied emotion was an end in itself. He never saw at any time in his life—neither when he shot like a brilliant meteor across the social sky, nor when he saw his past years spread out before him in the loneliness of his cell—that emotion is wasted unless it helps us to live. That is why Art cannot be separated, as he tried to separate it, from faith and morals. He asks what joy can be greater than to read beautiful books. Surely, the answer is, "To lead a beautiful life." Unless beautiful things, whatever they are, help us to do that, their beauty is as Dead Sea fruit which turns to dust and ashes in the mouth.

## THE FATAL GIFT.

It was his inability to see this which prevented Wilde from understanding Christ. He makes in "De Profundis" a study of the character of Jesus. It is very moving, very tender, strangely fascinating. Yet it seems to me to be vitiated by the same fallacy which ruined Wilde as a man. He insists on regarding Christ as a supreme imaginative artist, a supreme individualist, one who valued emotions for their own sake. Here is an example of what he meant:

Christ, had he been asked, would have said:—I feel quite certain about it—that the moment the prodigal son fell on his knees and wept, he made his hating wasted his substance with harlots, his swine-herding and hungering for the husks they ate, beautiful and holy moments in his life.

Could there be a more perversely parodic than this?

Perversity—that was the fatal gift of the one malicious fairy at Wilde's birth. The others gave him everything that should make life pleasant and honourable. The one troubled strand in the web of his nature unravelled all the rest. He even gloried in his perversity. He would like, he wrote, to have people say that it had turned the good things of his life to evil and the evil things to good!

Well, there was much in his nature that many of us loved and envied when we knew him, and love and envy still, apart from our admiration of his mind and artistry. Those who have never guessed what this "much" was will find it here. "De Profundis" reveals the man himself more than anything else he ever wrote, and it will, I think, be read longer than anything else he ever wrote. As a piece of literature it is worthy to stand beside Bunyan's "Grace Abounding" and the "Confessions" of Rousseau.

H. HAMILTON FYFE.

\* "De Profundis," by Oscar Wilde. Methuen. Published to-day.

WEEKLY REGISTER

Nov. 1, 1901

## The Drama.

## THE LAST OF THE DANDIES.

THOSE who had the good fortune to witness M. Rostand's piece, *L'Aiglon*, which was presented here in London last summer by Madame Sarah Bernhardt at Mr. Tree's own theatre, will find instructive points of comparison between it and Mr. Tree's latest production. Both plays have a good deal of what someone has called the interest of *bric-a-brac*—a sort of minor historical interest, that is. The distinction, if it is worth while making one, between these and the historical play proper, is that the latter deals with a noteworthy character or event of history for its true sake, while the former centres itself upon the accessories, the authentic details, which build up, not the character of the man, but his figure and outward appearance, or mode of life. Of course, no tolerable play can be constructed wholly of accessories, and there is no such impossible attempt in either of the pieces we are considering; but they escape it in different ways. In *L'Aiglon*, a major historical interest supervenes upon the minor one, and, whatever its faults, the play is thoroughly homogeneous. In *The Last of the Dandies*, the plot is supplied from a love-interest as unhistorical, I presume, in fact as it is in spirit. The motifs are not, perhaps, wholly incompatible, but, like oil and water, the mixture is at best unstable, and something of a *tour-de-force*. Cleverly written as it is, the impression left by Mr. Clyde Fitch's play is thus somewhat baffling and unsatisfactory. There is a vast deal in it to amuse and interest; but one does not seem to feel the absorbing and continuous interest which can only be aroused by a play governed wholly, and in every detail, by a single dramatic idea.

In construction and dialogue, the piece is, as I have said, cleverly, though not notably, written. The weakest scene is certainly the reception in Lady Blessington's *salon*. The conversation here falls painfully short of the brilliancy that one would expect in such a gathering. Perhaps the best scenes are the first and the last; the first is genuine comedy, the last, if not quite full tragedy, comes as near to it as the nature of the piece will allow. Where the character-interest predominates, in fact, the play is excellent,—at all events, with Mr. Tree to act; where the love-interest has the upper hand, it is thinnest and least successful. It is a pity, by the way, that the last flicker of Oscar Wilde's wit, "I'm dying beyond my means," is reproduced in a form that takes away half its point. Mr. Tree's impersonation of Count D'Orsay is a marvellously fine piece of acting, and would alone make the play worth while going to see. The word "comedian," with some such prefix as "eccentric," has been so usurped by celebrities of the music-hall boards that it is almost lost to serious dramatic language; but in the best and most refined sense of comedy, Mr. Tree is, perhaps, the most finished comedian on the stage. It would be impossible to follow him through all the excellences of his dexterous performance, but one cannot pass over in silence his very fine acting in the last scene, which might easily be made ridiculous, but in his hands is most impressive. He is admirably supported on the comic side by his two valets, played by Mr. Courtice Pounds and Mr. Robb Harwood; the latter in especial has hit on a half-unconscious mimicry of his master's mannerisms that is delightful. The minor satellites, the hairdresser, tailor, and money-lender, are also very amusingly rendered. Miss Lily Hanbury is a very striking Lady Blessington; it is not a *role* of which a great deal can be made, but she looks and acts it excellently. Miss Lily Bratton plays the heroine very prettily, but it is too slight a part to give much scope for her talent. Lady Summershire is admirably rendered by Mrs. Tree: she makes it, indeed, the most effective, after D'Orsay himself, or of any of the characters not broadly comic. Mr. H. B. Warner does very well as the somewhat uninteresting hero, Lord Raoul Ardale; and Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton is played with a great deal of tact and refinement by Mr. Gerald Lawrence. Altogether, the acting is well up to the high level that has become traditional at Her Majesty's, and the staging of the piece, as usual, is beyond criticism.

of a terrible punishment is impossible not to ex- a genuine sympathy for the to feel that to some nt the penitent atoned for his t himself and his genius and elty, his family, and the men his friends. His genius could ve had a more convincing ex- an his latest and his most tance—a prose poem that will ng our noblest legacies of pri- ture.

OSCAR WILDE'S BOOK.

Wholesome Criticism.

M. A. P.

WEEK ENDING  
FEB. 10, 1900.

## Lord Queensberry.

By the death of the Marquis of Queensberry, which took place on Wednesday in last week, a strange, strenuous, not altogether unpicturesque career, was brought to a prosaic close—in a bedroom at a London club, after a commonplace illness of moderate duration, at the comparatively early age of fifty-six. A lineal descendant of the famous "Black Douglas," whose name and deeds form one of the most romantic chapters to be found in Scottish history, John Sholto Douglas, eighth Marquis of Queensberry, came into his inheritance at the early age of fourteen, and for some forty years recognised no law but his own wishes, and left few desires unsatisfied.

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## Matrimonial.

It was in connection with his domestic relationships and with matters of religion, however, that Lord Queensberry chiefly came before the public attention, and in both these respects the Marquis on several occasions furnished subjects for public criticism. His first wife divorced him in 1887, after nearly twenty-one years of married life, and in 1893 he married again; but in less than a year this union was also annulled. It was about the time of his second marriage (which was almost of the nature of a runaway match) that Lord Queensberry delivered an extraordinary "lecture to women" at Princess' Hall, Piccadilly, in the course of which he advocated some very quaint changes in the matrimonial relationship as at present constituted.

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In religious matters, the Marquis claimed to be "a so-called atheist," and there is little doubt that it was upon this ground that, in 1880, after having sat for eight years as a representative peer for Scotland, he failed to secure re-election to the Upper House. He always attributed this rejection to the personal enmity of Lord Rosebery, to whom his antipathy became more marked as time went on.

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## Son v. Father.

THE Marquis's eldest son, Lord Drumlanrig, on the contrary, was regarded by Lord Rosebery with especial favour, and acted as assistant private secretary to that statesman when he filled the post of Foreign Secretary in Mr. Gladstone's 1892 Cabinet. For purposes of official convenience, in order that he might be able to sit in the House of Lords with his chief, Lord Drumlanrig was raised to the peerage as Lord Kelhead, so that the son of the Marquis became a peer of the United Kingdom, with a seat in the Upper House, while the Marquis himself was only a Scottish peer, and had no seat. Lord Queensberry bitterly resented the act by which he had been made to play second fiddle to his own son, and did not hesitate to express his feelings in print. He even went so far, I have been told, as to threaten to assault his son. Lord Kelhead, soon after his elevation, was accidentally killed while shooting, and the Marquis is succeeded by his second son, Lord Douglas of Hawick, who boldly "went into the City," and has won a claim to be regarded as one of the best mining experts in the country.

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## Two Incidents.

A MAN of strong individuality and of much latent talent, Lord Queensberry never turned either his abilities or the power which his position gave him to any really useful purpose. There are two incidents in his troubled and squalid career, however, which stand out prominently. One is that he read General Booth's book, "In Darkest England," with a thrill of horror, and sent the General a cheque for £100 and a characteristic letter; the other is that some four or five years ago he intervened, at considerable personal risk, on behalf of a son who had repudiated him, and thereby rendered a great public service by securing the investigation of one of the worst scandals of the century.

black 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."







## THE PICK OF THE BOOKSTALL.

"OUT OF THE DEPTHS"

"De Profundis," from the depths of Reading Gaol, comes the last book of Oscar Wilde, the man who was. They act his plays to-day, and laughing audiences wonder at the wit that cannot find its peer among living dramatists. The construction of "Lady Windermere's Fan," the humour of "The Importance of Being Earnest" still excite our admiration. The tarnished name of their author was fading into the haze with which good Father Time discreetly covers both honour and shame, both success and failure. Almost does it seem a matter for regret that his ghost should be raised once more.

Yet here "De Profundis," the book, is; and those who believe that "the proper study of mankind is man" can read and analyse, finding therein genius, eccentricity, apt phrases, emotional cloud-bursts of sorrow, and perhaps no little artificiality. Such a book indeed as might have been expected from Wilde—in Reading Gaol.

Mr. Robert Ross explains the publication. The book was placed in his possession when the author was released. It was the only work that Wilde wrote in prison, and the last in prose that he ever penned. The famous "Ballad of Reading Gaol" was composed after he had regained his liberty.

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### Stimulating Hope.

Hope, that blessing of the gods upon suffering humanity, was not denied even to him. Remembering his deserted death-bed, it stirs an infinite pity to read: "On the other side of the prison wall there are some poor black, soot-besmirched trees which are just breaking out into buds of an almost tender green. I know quite well what they are going through. They are finding expression." He hoped to do great things. "I believe I am to have enough to live on for about eighteen months at any rate, so that if I may not write beautiful books I may at least read beautiful books; and what can be greater? After that I hope to be able to recreate my creative faculty."

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### Dreadful Experience.

Of all his sufferings one stands out most prominently in his miserable recollection. Convicts are the "zanies of sorrow," the clowns whose hearts are broken. You can see it in their dress, especially designed to appeal to the sense of humour. When he was removed from London to Reading—"I had to stand on the centre platform of Clapham Junction in convict dress and handcuffed, for the world to look at. When people saw me they laughed. Each train as it came up swelled the audience. Nothing could exceed their amusement. That was, of course, before they knew who I was. As soon as they had been informed they laughed still more. For half an hour I stood there, in the grey November rain, surrounded by a jeering mob."

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B. FLETCHER ROBINSON.

"De Profundis." By Oscar Wilde. (Methuen, 5s.)



# The Daily Mail

## OUT OF THE DEPTHS.\*

### A PRISON JOURNAL.

By H. HAMILTON FYFE.

Among all the most intimate, most moving records of the growth of a soul, I know none that lies nearer to the source of tears than this.

When Oscar Wilde was sent to prison the calamity of a life so rich in promises lay like a dull weight upon the mind. When he died, miserably poor and suffering grievously, in Paris, a seamed and sordid curtain seemed to fall upon the tragedy of his wasted years. No one, after reading these pages which he wrote in his prison—the only pages he did write there—can ever think of him quite in that way again.

They show us that in these two years through which he ate the bread of affliction, much was made plain to him that had been hidden before. Sorrow taught him lessons that could never be learned of Pleasure. In his agony and despair of mind he chanced upon the key to the mystery of Pain. The chart of the ocean of life lay spread before him, and in his narrow cell he traced out the course he must steer for as long as his voyage lasted.

#### THE COMING OF HUMILITY.

At first he bitterly resented his punishment:

I longed to die. . . . I determined to commit suicide on the very day on which I left prison. After a time that evil mood passed away, and I made up my mind to live, but to wear gloom as a king wears purple: never to smile again: to do whatever he thought his friends into a house of mourning: to make my friends walk slowly in sadness with me: to teach them that melancholy is the true secret of life:

to maim them with an alien sorrow: to mar them with my own pain. Now I feel quite differently. . . . I must learn how to be cheerful and happy.

Not everyone will sympathise with the sentences in which he tells how, in his self-abasement, self-hatred, he found Humility, hidden away in his nature like a treasure in a field. Upon some natures they may jar. That is because Oscar Wilde, even in his "Vita Nuova," as he called it, was Oscar Wilde still. Still, above everything else, an artist in words. Still a coiner of exotic phrases. Still supremely interested in himself.

There are people, I do not doubt, who will say that he was simply posing all through the book. I am sure they are wrong. I am sure, if they will only read with pity and with charity, they will see they are wrong. There are, I admit, passages which at first, perhaps, sound insincere. This, for example:

I bore up against everything with some stubbornness of will, and much rebellion of nature, till I had absolutely nothing left in the world but one thing. I had lost my name, my position, my happiness, my freedom, my wealth. I was a prisoner and a pauper. But I still had my children left. Suddenly they were taken away from me by the law. It was a blow so appalling that I did not know what to do, so I flung myself on my knees and bowed my head and said, "The body of a child is as the body of the Lord: I am not worthy of either."



All the more does this tend to convey an impression of theatricality from the fact that Wilde was never drawn towards the faith which makes "the body of the Lord" its holiest bond and sacrament of union. Yet, read this haunting page of confession, and say if a man capable of setting down these searing, scorching sentences could possibly be insincere either with himself or with those (not originally the public) for whom he wrote:

Terrible as was what the world did to me, what I did to myself was far more terrible still. . . . The gods had given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. I amused myself with being a flâneur, a dandy, a man of fashion. I surrounded myself with the smaller natures and the meaner minds. . . . Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensation. . . . I ended in horrible disgrace. There is only one thing for me now, absolute humility.

#### ALL THINGS FOR GOOD.

From here the next step was natural. "The meek shall inherit the earth," Christ said. Not till we have stripped off pride and all the unlovely qualities which pride binds upon us can we realise

How fair a place to fill  
Is left to each man still;

can we understand that all the events of life may make for the good of character, if only they are looked at aright.

I have got to make everything that has happened to me good for me. The plank bed, the loathsome food, the hard ropes shredded into oakum till one's finger-tips grow dull with pain, the menial offices with which each day begins and finishes . . . each and all of these things I have to transform into a spiritual experience. There is not a single degradation of the body which I must not try and make into a spiritualising of the soul.

I could almost wish the book ended there upon that note of sorrowful simplicity. We should miss many arresting thoughts, many beautiful forms of words, for never in anything he wrote did Wilde frame more exquisite phrases than we find here. Yet we should feel more certain that he had won the true peace which passeth all understanding. The pity and the terror that cleanse our hearts would be unalloyed by any doubting whether his feet were indeed set at last upon the firm way.

The more he talks about his emotions the less real they seem. The reason of that is plain. He fancied emotion was an end in itself. He never saw at any time in his life—neither when he shot like a brilliant meteor across the social sky, nor when he saw his past years spread out before him in the loneliness of his cell—that emotion is wasted unless it helps us to live. That is why Art cannot be separated, as he tried to separate it, from faith and morals. He asks what joy can be greater than to read beautiful books. Surely, the answer is, "To lead a beautiful life." Unless beautiful things, whatever they are, help us to do that, their beauty is as Dead Sea fruit which turns to dust and ashes in the mouth.

#### THE FATAL GIFT.

It was his inability to see this which prevented Wilde from understanding Christ. He makes in "De Profundis" a study of the character of Jesus. It is very moving, very tender, strangely fascinating. Yet it seems to me to be vitiated by the same fallacy which ruined Wilde as a man. He insists on regarding Christ as a supreme imaginative artist, a supreme individualist, one who valued emotions for their own sake. Here is an example of what he meant:

Christ, had he been asked, would have said—I feel quite certain about it—that the moment the prodigal son fell on his knees and wept, he made his having wasted his substance with harlots, his swine-herding and hungering for the husks they ate, beautiful and holy moments in his life.

Could there be a more perverse parody than this!

Perversity—that was the fatal gift of the one malicious fairy at Wilde's birth. The others gave him everything that should make life pleasant and honourable. The one troubled strand in the web of his nature unravelled all the rest. He even gloried in his perversity. He would like, he wrote, to have people say that it had turned the good things of his life to evil and the evil things to good!

Well, there was much in his nature that many of us loved and envied when we knew him, and love and envy still, apart from our admiration of his mind and artistry. Those who have never guessed what this "much" was will find it here. "De Profundis" reveals the man himself more than anything else he ever wrote, and it will, I think, be read longer than anything else he ever wrote. As a piece of literature it is worthy to stand beside Bunyan's "Grace Abounding" and the "Confessions" of Rousseau.

H. HAMILTON FYFE.

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## The Drama.

## THE LAST OF THE DANDIES.

THOSE who had the good fortune to witness M. Rostand's piece, *l'Aiglon*, which was presented here in London last summer by Madame Sarah Bernhardt at Mr. Tree's own theatre, will find instructive points of comparison between it and Mr. Tree's latest production. Both plays have a good deal of what someone has called the interest of *bric-a-brac*—a sort of minor historical interest, that is. The distinction, if it is worth while making one, between these and the historical play proper, is that the latter deals with a noteworthy character or event of history for its true sake, while the former centres itself upon the accessories, the authentic details, which build up, not the character of the man, but his figure and outward appearance, or mode of life. Of course, no tolerable play can be constructed wholly of accessories, and there is no such impossible attempt in either of the pieces we are considering; but they escape it in different ways. In *l'Aiglon*, a major historical interest supervenes upon the minor one, and, whatever its faults, the play is thoroughly homogeneous. In *The Last of the Dandies*, the plot is supplied from a love-interest as unhistorical, I presume, in fact as it is in spirit. The *motifs* are not, perhaps, wholly incompatible, but, like oil and water, the mixture is at best unstable, and something of a *tour-de-force*. Cleverly written as it is, the impression left by Mr. Clyde Fitch's play is thus somewhat baffling and unsatisfactory. There is a vast deal in it to amuse and interest; but one does not seem to feel the absorbing and continuous interest which can only be aroused by a play governed wholly, and in every detail, by a single dramatic idea.

In construction and dialogue, the piece is, as I have said, cleverly, though not notably, written. The weakest scene is certainly the reception in Lady Blessington's *salon*. The conversation here falls painfully short of the brilliancy that one would expect in such a gathering. Perhaps the best scenes are the first and the last; the first is genuine comedy, the last, if not quite full tragedy, comes as near to it as the nature of the piece will allow. Where the character-interest predominates, in fact, the play is excellent,—at all events, with Mr. Tree to act; where the love-interest has the upper hand, it is thinnest and least successful. It is a pity, by the way, that the last flicker of Oscar Wilde's wit, "I'm dying beyond my means," is reproduced in a form that takes away half its point. Mr. Tree's impersonation of Count D'Orsay is a marvellously fine piece of acting, and would alone make the play worth while going to see. The word "comedian," with some such prefix as "eccentric," has been so usurped by celebrities of the music-hall boards that it is almost lost to serious dramatic language; but in the best and most refined sense of comedy, Mr. Tree is, perhaps, the most finished comedian on the stage. It would be impossible to follow him through all the excellences of his dexterous performance, but one cannot pass over in silence his very fine acting in the last scene, which might easily be made ridiculous, but in his hands is most impressive. He is admirably supported on the comic side by his two valets, played by Mr. Courtice Pounds and Mr. Robb Harwood; the latter in especial has hit on a half-unconscious mimicry of his master's mannerisms that is delightful. The minor satellites, the hairdresser, tailor, and money-lender, are also very amusingly rendered. Miss Lily Hanbury is a very striking Lady Blessington; it is not a *rôle* of which a great deal can be made, but she looks and acts it excellently. Miss Lily Brayton plays the heroine very prettily, but it is too slight a part to give much scope for her talent. Lady Summershire is admirably rendered by Mrs. Tree: she makes it, indeed, the most effective, after D'Orsay himself, or of any of the characters not broadly comic. Mr. H. B. Warner does very well as the somewhat uninteresting hero, Lord Raoul Ardale; and Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton is played with a great deal of tact and refinement by Mr. Gerald Lawrence. Altogether, the acting is well up to the high level that has become traditional at Her Majesty's, and the staging of the piece, as usual, is beyond criticism.



**Lord Queensberry.**

By the death of the Marquis of Queensberry, which took place on Wednesday in last week, a strange, strenuous, not altogether unpicturesque career, was brought to a prosaic close—in a bedroom at a London club, after a commonplace illness of moderate duration, at the comparatively early age of fifty-six. A lineal descendant of the famous "Black Douglas," whose name and deeds form one of the most romantic chapters to be found in Scottish history, John Sholto Douglas, eighth Marquis of Queensberry, came into his inheritance at the early age of fourteen, and for some forty years recognised no law but his own wishes, and left few desires unsatisfied.

**Matrimonial.**

It was in connection with his domestic relationships and with matters of religion, however, that Lord Queensberry chiefly came before the public attention, and in both these respects the Marquis on several occasions furnished subjects for public criticism. His first wife divorced him in 1887, after nearly twenty-one years of married life, and in 1893 he married again; but in less than a year this union was also annulled. It was about the time of his second marriage (which was almost of the nature of a runaway match) that Lord Queensberry delivered an extraordinary "lecture to women" at Princess' Hall, Piccadilly, in the course of which he advocated some very quaint changes in the matrimonial relationship as at present constituted.



In religious matters, the Marquis claimed to be "a so-called atheist," and there is little doubt that it was upon this ground that, in 1880, after having sat for eight years as a representative peer for Scotland, he failed to secure re-election to the Upper House. He always attributed this rejection to the personal enmity of Lord Rosebery, to whom his antipathy became more marked as time went on.

**Son v. Father.**

THE Marquis's eldest son, Lord Drumlanrig, on the contrary, was regarded by Lord Rosebery with especial favour, and acted as assistant private secretary to that statesman when he filled the post of Foreign Secretary in Mr. Gladstone's 1892 Cabinet. For purposes of official convenience, in order that he might be able to sit in the House of Lords with his chief, Lord Drumlanrig was raised to the peerage as Lord Kelhead, so that the son of the Marquis became a peer of the United Kingdom, with a seat in the Upper House, while the Marquis himself was only a Scottish peer, and had no seat. Lord Queensberry bitterly resented the act by which he had been made to play second fiddle to his own son, and did not hesitate to express his feelings in print. He even went so far, I have been told, as to threaten to assault his son. Lord Kelhead, soon after his elevation, was accidentally killed while shooting, and the Marquis is succeeded by his second son, Lord Douglas of Hawick, who boldly "went into the City," and has won a claim to be regarded as one of the best mining experts in the country.

**Two Incidents.**

A MAN of strong individuality and of much latent talent, Lord Queensberry never turned either his abilities or the power which his position gave him to any really useful purpose. There are two incidents in his troubled and squalid career, however, which stand out prominently. One is that he read General Booth's book, "In Darkest England," with a thrill of horror, and sent the General a cheque for £100 and a characteristic letter; the other is that some four or five years ago he intervened, at considerable personal risk, on behalf of a son who had repudiated him, and thereby rendered a great public service. 2019 seen Women's University Library 307 of one of the worst scandals of the century.



# THE SERIOUS CHARGE AGAINST A SALISBURY SCHOOLMASTER.

## THE ADJOURNED HEARING.

The Council Chamber was crowded yesterday (Thursday) when Wm. Gane, head-master of the St. Thomas' Schools, was brought up in custody upon remand charged with unlawfully committing in private, acts of indecency on several boys. The magistrates present were the Mayor (Mr. E. F. Pye-Smith), Mr. E. Waters, Mr. W. M. Hammick, Mr. S. R. Atkins, Mr. G. Fullford, Mr. W. Marlow, and Mr. R. C. Harding. The ex-Mayor (Mr. Haskins) and Mr. Brown (who are managers of the School) also occupied seats on the Bench, but took no part in the adjudication of the case. Mr. W. H. Jackson, of the firm of Hodding and Jackson, defended.

The Magistrates' Clerk (Mr. Powning charged William Gane (aged 38) for that, on the 6th of May, 1895, in the parish of St. Thomas, New Sarum, he did unlawfully, in private, commit on Frank Burton acts of gross indecency, contrary to the provisions of the 48 and 49 Vict., chap. 69, section 11; and further, on divers days in 1893, 1894, and 1895, did commit similar acts on William Dinnicombe; and further, on divers days in or about the month of May, 1894, and March, 1895, on Arthur Phillips; and further, in August, 1894, on Sidney Henbest Dyke; and further, in December, 1894, and divers other days in 1894, on George Searle; and further, in 1892, 1893, and 1894, on Albert Edward Bowey; and further, in 1891, on Frederick Voce; and further, in August, 1893, and divers other days in 1893 and 1894, on William Arthur Brooks; and further, on divers days in 1893 and 1894, on Sidney Hopkins.

Mr. R. A. Wilson said he appeared on behalf of the managers of St. Thomas' Schools. The charge had come as a complete surprise to them, and, of course, in the interests of the schools the case must be watched. The managers wished for a thorough investigation.

The Mayor: There are no boys in court, Mr. Mathews?

Mr. Mathews: No, sir.

Mr. Jackson, after having received an assurance that all witnesses were out of court, said that some of the charges which were preferred against his client had been carefully concealed from the defence, so that defendant had not had an opportunity of instructing him upon the cross-examination of the witnesses who would be called before them. He (Mr. Jackson) could truthfully say that he had absolutely no instructions, and was therefore not in a position to cross-examine some of the witnesses. He merely mentioned this seeing that they might take it from him that there were three or four cases with regard to which he had received no instruction whatever. He then asked that Mr. Gane, who was standing between two policemen, might be allowed to sit, as he (Mr. Jackson) might want to ask him some questions.—The magistrates then gave permission for the defendant to be seated with his solicitor.

Frank Burton, 13, residing with his widowed mother, West Street, Fisherton, was the first witness. He said he went to St. Thomas' School and had been there nearly four years. Prisoner was the schoolmaster, who had done things improper to him. It was in the cricket season—June or July last. One evening, about eight or half-past, prisoner took him into the schoolroom. No-one else was with them. Prisoner took him on his knee. Witness then described certain alleged improprieties of prisoner, which lasted a quarter of an hour. Prisoner, he said, accompanied him away from the school. Prisoner gave him a penny. [Witness burst into tears upon being asked certain questions, but afterwards gave his evidence in a sharp and intelligent manner.] Witness also stated that shortly after the first occasion prisoner took him into the schoolroom and there was a repetition of what took place before. A third interview took place about eight or nine months after the second, and on the fourth occasion—Monday, May 6th—prisoner asked him to go to Britford Meadows to play football with the Band of Hope boys. Witness brought home from Britford some rhubarb for prisoner and took it to his lodgings in High Street. He went up into prisoner's room, and Gane showed him a number of photographs of ladies and children. Improper conduct followed and prisoner gave him oranges and sweets, and a book called "The Scholar's Ornament." Witness left and got home at quarter past ten o'clock. Prisoner had given him several books. Witness told several boys what had taken place.

Mr. Jackson, in cross-examination: Did you use to forget things in a funny unaccountable sort of way? Do you remember Mr. Gane expressing surprise at your loss of memory? Do you remember Mr. Gane charging you with telling stories?—Witness's answers could not be clearly heard in the Press box, but he was understood to deny the suggestions of the defending solicitor, but said there had been some charge of telling stories.—Witness, in further cross-examinations, said he lived at Knoyle before coming to Salisbury, but he had never said anything about what he was taught there. The winter before last, during the football season, prisoner had done what was improper, but he had not then asked any questions. Prisoner never asked him why he blushed up without reason. He admitted that before prisoner touched him first he had been disobedient at school. Witness used to get "crabby" at school sometimes—(laughter)—when he was "put out" for punishment. He never "cheeked" the schoolmaster. Witness denied that he had told Gane that someone at Knoyle had taught him indecency. Witness had been with the boys to various excursions. Coming back from London in the carriage the boys romped and played and had a good game, Gane playing with them.

Mr. Jackson, referring to witness's statement that prisoner had given him a penny, asked: That wasn't the first penny he had given you?—A.: No.—Q.: He was always giving boys pennies, wasn't he, for their work?—A.: Yes.—Q.: What do you think he gave you the penny for on the first occasion?—A.: For bringing the cricket things down.—Q.: When you went to Mr. Gane's lodgings on the 6th May did you notice whether the blinds were down, curtains drawn, or door locked?—A.: I didn't notice that they were. The blinds were not drawn and the door not locked.—Q.: Was he reading letters when you went in first?—A.: Yes, I think he was. He gave me a book containing photographs to look at. Mr. Gane left the room while I was looking at the book.—Q.: Do you remember his saying "Are you in a hurry, Frank?"—A.: I don't remember.—Q.: Do you remember whether he said, "I am afraid you have been at your old habits?"—A.: No.—Q.: What did he say before he took you on his knee?—A.: I can't remember.—Q.: You hadn't been smoking, had you?—No answer.—Q.: Had you been more than usually inattentive at school before the 6th May?—A.: Yes.—Do you remember his saying as you left the street door, "Remember Frank, you promised?" and you said "All right; good-night sir?"—A.: No, I don't remember that.—Q.: Do you remember whether you told Mr. Gane that you had been struck with a football?—A.: Yes.—Q.: Do you remember having a romp with him after on May 6th?—A.: No, sir.

At this point—ten minutes after one o'clock—the Court adjourned for lunch.

Upon the Court resuming at twenty minutes to two, the cross-examination was continued.

Q.: Do you say you made no promise to Mr. Gane when you parted from him?—A.: I don't know, sir.—Q.: Did he kiss you?—A.: I think he did, sir.—Q.: Surely you know whether he did or not.—A.: I think he did, but I am not quite sure.—Q.: Did you tell the police what happened on the previous night.—A.: Dyke came for me.—Q.: Can you tell me why you told Mr. Gane that you came from Knoyle.—A.: No.

Harriett Jane Burton, mother of the last witness, said her son came home just after ten o'clock on Monday, May 6th. He brought home some sweets and two oranges. He put the former on the mantelpiece, and the next day witness gave them away to a little boy.—By Mr. Jackson: Her son came home at all times; sometimes he was at work, and sometimes he attended the Boys' Brigade drill. She had not noticed that her boy had been troublesome; and he had not been getting "out of hand" with her.

Wm. Dinnicombe, son of George Dinnicombe, caretaker of the Church House, said he was 13 years of age last October, and had been a pupil at St. Thomas' school for nearly three years. About two years ago witness had a bad leg. The scholars were having entertainment at the Assembly Rooms, and after a rehearsal, two boys helped witness back to the school. Witness was going to take part in the entertainment. He went back to the School (upstairs) in order to choose his prize. The other two boys then left him, and he was alone with Mr. Gane, who asked him if his legs pained him, and then felt them, and looked at them, and afterwards carried him on his back to his house, and from thence to his (witness's) house. Prisoner did not touch him in any way. One evening in the winter of 1893 Mr. Gane sent him a box of papers at his house that had been done at school and gave him 6d. and an orange for doing it. Witness went

alone, and prisoner took him on his knee, and asked him if he would get married when he grew up. Witness replied "I might." Prisoner then asked him various other questions, and witness, in reply to most of them, said "I don't know." Prisoner also disarranged witness's clothing, and afterwards gave him an orange and told him to go home, and he went. The lamp was lit in the room and the curtains were across the window. Witness saw prisoner again about a week after and he asked him to go down to his house and mark some exercise books. This was about 5.30 in the even-

ing; no-one went with him. Prisoner was having his tea when witness got there. He gave witness the books and told him to go to the window and mark them. Witness did so, and prisoner gave him 3d. for doing so. Prisoner then told him to look at some photographs of views and afterwards took him on his knee and acted familiarly with him. Prisoner gave him nothing at all this time. About three weeks ago witness was at the school upstairs, in the morning, putting out the slates. After he had done this he went to the cupboard, and Mr. Gane came up behind him and asked him a question. Prisoner then did something to him, and afterwards gave him some magazines to post. The second time prisoner told witness not to tell anyone, as he was giving him advice. He did not say what the advice was. In the winter of this year witness went skating with prisoner at Wishford, and they returned to prisoner's house. Another boy accompanied them, but he soon left. Prisoner then acted in a similar manner to witness as he had done on previous occasions. Prisoner did not give him anything this time. Witness never told his father of what had occurred; he was ashamed to. He told some of the boys at school—Frank Burton and Sidney Dyke.—By Mr. Jackson: Why did you tell Burton and Dyke. Are they particular chums of yours.—A.: Yes. I told them after the first and second occasions.—Why did you tell them?—Because one of them told me something similar.—Q.: Why were you ashamed to tell your father that you had been badly treated? You had done nothing wrong yourself.—A.: I don't know.—Q.: Were you afraid that you would have to tell him the conversation which preceded it?—Yes, sir.—Q.: Did prisoner warn you against certain practices?—A.: Yes.

Mr. Jackson asked the Clerk to read out some of the notes he had taken, and as a remark was not there which he requested should be written, he said he must ask that the notes should be taken much more fully than they were. The Clerk had the assistance of a gentleman by his side. The evidence in each case was a repetition and had been gathered secretly, and he must ask that the evidence, however irrelevant it might be, should be taken down more fully. As it was, it was most unjust to his client (applause in court).

The Mayor observed that unless due decorum was observed—as it should be in such a case as this—he must have the court cleared.

Mr. Jackson: To no person in the court is the duty more painful than to me, as I have to ask such questions of an innocent boy. I might be relieved of a considerable amount of repetition if the evidence is taken down as it is given.

The Mayor: If you wish any special point put down, will you kindly mention it, and the Clerk will do so.

Cross-examination continued.—Q.: Did prisoner tell you what the effect would be on your body?—A.: Yes.—Q.: Did you promise him to give the practice up?—A.: No.—Q.: What do you mean?—A.: He didn't ask me.

Arthur Phillips, aged 13, said he lived with his father, who was a gardener. He had been to St. Thomas' School for three or four months. In June or July of last year prisoner did something to witness at the school.—By Mr. Jackson: Mr. Gane spoke to him about his knocking a little girl down, but witness denied doing so. Witness, however, afterwards admitted doing so, and promised him not to interfere with a little girl again. He did not tell his father what had occurred, because he thought it was too bad.—The Mayor: Did you indecently assault this girl?—Witness: No, sir.

Sidney Herbert Dyke, aged 14, said he still went to St. Thomas' School. On August, 1894, prisoner asked him to stay in school as he wanted to see him. Prisoner asked him several questions and did something to him. Prisoner then gave him 6d. He did not tell his father what had occurred, because he didn't like to.—By Mr. Jackson:—Prisoner had spoken to him of his action towards a little girl. He had seen a letter written by the girl to a school-fellow, but there were no improper suggestions in it. He had talked to persons about prisoner's action towards him, but not unless they asked him.



# The Echo,

## The Message of Suffering.

OSCAR WILDE'S  
"DE PROFUNDIS."

I have just laid aside "De Profundis" (Methuen), and was meditating upon the marvellous and almost mystic message of Oscar Wilde to his own and all succeeding generations, when I chanced to encounter those lines from Sir Lewis Morris which bear the title, "Souls in Prison." My horizon had been enlarged, my conception of human life had been deepened by those wonderful thoughts born of solitude, sorrow, and suffering in Reading Gaol. It was scarcely the moment for small thoughts and small minds, seeing that this genius had penetrated the depths of individual grief and wrested from them the eternal message of sorrow. Yet these lines I met were useful for comparison, the thoughts in "the house of retributive Law." Listen to Sir Lewis as he attempts to describe the condition of mind a sentenced man possesses:—

Till at last all longing was sunk and spent  
In a lifeless, fathomless slough of content,  
Not repentance, nor fear, nor grief,  
Nor a belief at all, nor yet unbelief;  
But a soul which skulks from itself like a thief.

And is damned for ever, and dead.

What unreality of feeling is here expressed! Poe's fancy is not touched with "the live coal" of human experience, hence only the rhythmic motion of the words remain. But look at this product of Reading Gaol which makes its appearance to-day. It is a human document, and more so, for one feels the anguish, one realises the degradation, one participates in the deprivation, and one rejoices in the conquest.

### The New Life.

Does one shed a tear in silent recognition of obscured greatness? So be it; it is not unmanly. Temperament will out, nothing can imprison that. Sorrow is so universal that one never tries to understand it, we simply regard it as a Divine ordinance. Listen not to the words of Sir Lewis Morris now, but to the voice of one who cried out from the wilderness it may be: one who knew by experience that "suffering is one very long moment." What does he say? It is only this: "Where there is sorrow there is holy ground." Oh, what truth such a simple sentence contains. Let the poor deserted man speak again.

When I was brought down from my prison to the Court of Bankruptcy, between two policemen — waited in the long dreary corridor that, before the whole crowd, whom an action so sweet and simple hushed into silence, he might gravely raise his hat to me, as, handcuffed and with bowed head, I passed him by. Men have gone to heaven for smaller things than that.

What recognition of noble purpose, what prodigality almost of thanks! Oscar Wilde then goes on to speak of his realisation "that nothing in the whole world is meaningless and suffering least of all." This was the last thing left to him, and probably the best, for it formed "the starting point for a fresh development." But what did this Vita Nuova involve? Primarily he was called upon to free himself "from any possible bitterness of feeling against the world." Then followed a belief and dependence in and upon himself, the creation of an intense individualism.

### Sorrow, the Supreme Emotion.

Once he was filled with rage, then came the desire for death, then the determination to destroy himself, and finally the intention of distributing gloom.

Finally these haunting tendencies disappeared; and in their place came "a real desire for life," life in order to explore the new world that opened to him. This is how he puts it:—

I now see that sorrow, being the supreme emotion of which man is capable, is at once the type and test of all great art. . . . Sorrow is the ultimate type both in life and art.

The mere illusions of the eye and appetite have now lost their charm, and he, like others before him, realised that "the secret of life is suffering." He had tasted the fruits of one part of the garden, but the other half had its secrets for him also. Suffering is explained by love.

I am convinced that there is no other, and that if the world has indeed, as I have said, been built of sorrow, it has been built by the hands of love, because in no other way could the soul of man, for whom the world was made, reach the full stature of its perfection.

The cultivation and perfection of the soul through the medium of suffering and sorrow, has, alas! been only rarely realised. With exquisite reference to the Christ-life the idea is elaborated. Let me give you one:—

He knew that in the soul of one who is ignorant, there is always room for a great idea. . . . The moment of repentance is the moment of initiation.

The volume needs no gush, it is too human, too much of flesh and blood is contained therein; it is the revelation of a lonely soul, expressed in terms of poetic genius and pervasive thought. It is irresistibly fascinating and helpful.

W. F. B.



## OSCAR WILDE'S BOOK.

## Wholesome Criticism.

CANON BEECHING, in a sermon preached on Sunday last in Westminster Abbey, on "The Sinlessness of Christ," from the text "Why callest thou Me good?" (St. Mark x. 18), referred to Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*. He said (we quote from the *Times*): One wonders sometimes if Englishmen have given up reading their Gospels. 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, 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 the 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. "The world," he says, "had always loved the saint as being the nearest possible approach to the perfection of God; Christ, through some Divine instinct in Him, seems to have always loved the sinner as being the nearest possible approach to the perfection of man. To turn an interesting thief into a tedious honest man was not His aim. . . . But in a manner not yet understood of the world He regarded sin and suffering as being in themselves beautiful and holy things, and modes of perfection." It seems to have struck the writer at this point that our Lord had Himself explained that He consorted with sinners, as a physician with the sick, to call them to repentance. For he goes on: "Of course the sinner must repent; but why?—simply because otherwise he would be unable to realize what he had done." In other words, a man is the better for any sort of emotional experience, when it is past, because he is fertilized by it as by a crop of wild oats; a form of philosophy which Tennyson in *In Memoriam* well characterized as "Procureress to the Lords of Hell." 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 woe 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 good? And how can we expect to reach 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!



The People 2 March 1905

### "DE PROFUNDIS."

There was a time when I was inclined to think in regard to the late Oscar Wilde that it would have been better for everybody—one might say the world in general—if his works and all memory of him could have been wiped out and forgotten. The taint of his unnatural crimes seems still to linger about his finest inspirations. A hundred years hence it would be different, and I believe there are works and thoughts of Oscar Wilde which will be living and elevating influences a hundred years hence, and longer.

One is all the more indignant when a man of great culture and endowed with poetic imagination, owing a duty to the reputation of his family and to the honour and distinction of his country, descends to the gutter, and, as Wilde did, even degrades the gutter. "De Profundis" (Metheun), his last contribution to the literature of his time, however, softens one to the unhappy man's memory and prompts something like a generous forgiveness on the ground that he was a lunatic, with lucid intervals in which he was another being altogether, sane, and scholarly in the highest sense of the term.

"De Profundis" is the revelation of a great soul that has escaped from a devilish influence that for a time controlled it. If it were possible to believe in a man being at intervals literally possessed of a devil it would be easy to account for the strange contrasts of ugliness and beauty, of devil and angel, alternately controlling the impulses and the actions of Oscar Wilde. "De Profundis" is a heart-breaking confession, and at the same time such a penitential acceptance of a terrible punishment that it is impossible not to experience a genuine sympathy for the writer, and to feel that to some great extent the penitent atoned for his sin against himself and his genius and against society, his family, and the men who were his friends. His genius could hardly have had a more convincing exemplar than his latest and his most human volume—a prose poem that will rank as one of the greatest of prison literature.



# THE DAILY CHRONICLE.

## REV. R. J. CAMPBELL'S RETURN.

The Rev. R. J. Campbell, evidently greatly improved in health, was back again at the City Temple yesterday for the usual midday service, after his six weeks' holiday.

Before beginning his sermon he referred to the many messages of welcome sent to him on his return, and mentioned that only a few minutes before he had received a telegram from someone who greeted him "on behalf of the congregation." This, he said, caused him some surprise, as he imagined that those present were mostly strangers to each other. Here, as if endorsing the telegram, the congregation burst into applause.

Referring to the revivals in London and in Wales Mr. Campbell said: "With all my heart I wish well to the efforts that are being put forth at the Albert Hall to move London. I am perfectly convinced that a marvellous answer to prayer is being realised, not only in London, but all over the land. 'Man cannot live by bread alone,' and the time has come when the heart of England is turning back to the eternal truths."

Mr. Campbell's sermon was on the subject of "retribution," based on Peter's denial of Christ. It was a perilous thing, the preacher said, to criticise Miss Marie Corelli, but he thought she had mistaken Peter. She spoke of him, during those three days when his Master lay in the tomb, as talking madly, volubly, to anyone and to all. She was wrong. Peter, he believed, endured his agony in silence.

As one of his illustrations, Mr. Campbell quoted a long passage from a humorous book, "De Profundis," a copy of which he had brought with him into the pulpit.



# The Daily News.

## THE CHURCHES.

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Canon Beeching on Oscar Wilde. —

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."

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"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."

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"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 woe 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."