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Oscar Wilde  
Scrapbook

Vol. **7**

Here and there in other parts of the book the real man creeps out, and we get a glimpse, in spite of his fall, of the arrogance of genius. But leaving out of the question the state of mind in which this book was composed, it is impossible to deny its beauty and unfailing charm. It will live among the records of prison life.

Bazaar

THE BAZAAR, THE EXCHANGE AND MART.

March 15, 1903

Doubts are being thrown upon the assertion that the "De Profundis" of Oscar Wilde was written in prison. It is pointed out the regulations are so stringent that no prisoner who is not a "first-class misdemeanant" would be permitted to engage in journalistic or literary enterprises. As the "De Profundis" is likely to be a classic, the question should be thrashed out at the beginning of the twentieth century rather than at the end of it.

A glamour surrounds the book that is written in prison. Lovelace wrote his still living poem, containing the lines "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage," in the Gate House at Westminster, where he was kept in durance vile. Bunyan wrote the "Pilgrim's Progress" in Bedford Gaol, and Cooper "The Purgatory of Suicides" in that of Stafford. Hundreds of books, some of them of the very greatest importance, have been written in prison. Many of them will be found duly recorded in Mr. Langford's work "Prison Books and their Authors."

Dec. 29, 1902

The Appeal Court in Paris recently had an important case before it—important, that is to say, by reason of a fact which transpired during the course of the hearing, though the suit itself was trivial enough. The former landlord of a hotel had brought an action against the present proprietor for the delivery up of certain boxes, and on being asked why he manifested such great interest in them, replied that they contained unpublished manuscripts of the late Mr. Oscar Wilde, who was his tenant and had died in his house.

If the boxes really did contain even no more than two or three manuscripts of the kind suggested, they were worth fighting for to the bitter end. Among English authors of the last days of the nineteenth century Oscar Wilde towered like a giant, a fact which is already fully appreciated, for there is a great demand for everything or anything he wrote, and that demand is increasing daily.

The first copy of the "Queen's Gambit"

## Yorkshire Daily Post

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2019-03-18 Jissen Women's University Library

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## THE BAZAAR, THE EXCHANGE AND MART.

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March 18, 1903

2019-03-18

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MARCH 18, 1905.

Pelican 161

PELICAN

If it cannot be said of the late Oscar Wilde that "nothing in his life became him like the leaving it," it may surely be truthfully recorded that nothing which he ever wrote is at once so fine, so unspeakable and grandly sorrowful as "De Profundis," which, according to his intimate friend, Mr. Robert Ross, "was the only work he wrote while in prison, and the last work in prose he ever wrote." It is a record of suffering, of carefully analysed feeling, and of hope for the future—of hope never fulfilled. Wilde wrote much that is fine. He wrote nothing finer than "De Profundis," a book which ought to, and probably will, live for very many years to come. Messrs. Methuen and Co., of 36, Essex Street, have published the book, which is now in its second edition.

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One of the most interesting things about the recently-published book by Oscar Wilde is the justice and human kindness of the press towards it. I never remember to have read so many carefully-written reviews of any work. I have seen no article which had any ring of insincerity or which considered it right to continue the man's punishment after his death. And yet in private life, in conversation, the people who are still implacable are in my experience more numerous than the others. It seems to me that the action of the press in this matter has been magnificent.

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MARCH 22, 1905.

Guardian 162

The Guardian,

REVIEWS.

"DE PROFUNDIS."

*De Profundis.* By OSCAR WILDE. Methuen. 5s. net.

This book is not accurately named. It is written indeed from the depths of shame and sorrow. No doubt can arise as to the sincerity of the pages which describe the agony endured on the station platform at Clapham Junction, when, after his sentence, Wilde was kept waiting in the rain for half-an-hour, while the crowd jeered—surely an unnecessary aggravation of a prisoner's misery; or his still greater agony when he learned that he had been deprived of the custody of his children. But the depths from which the Psalmist wrote were altogether different. They were the depths of acknowledged and repented sin; the voice that rose from them was a cry for mercy and redemption, and no such voice is to be heard here. Wilde was so accomplished a literary craftsman that he understood the emotional suggestiveness of the title he adopted, and so made use of it, although he would have repudiated its religious significance; and in one page of his book he has clothed his confession in language so akin to that of piety that a much-advertised review has compared his book to Bunyan's "Grace Abounding," notwithstanding that in plain terms its author renounces both religion and morality. The passage we refer to is the following:—

"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 *déneur*, a dandy, a man of fashion. I surrounded myself with the smaller natures and the meaner minds. I became the spendthrift of my own genius, and to waste an eternal youth gave me a curious joy. Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensation. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion. Desire, at the end, was a malady, or a madness, or both. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that, therefore, what one has done in the secret chamber one has some day to cry aloud on the housetop. I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace. There is only one thing for me now, absolute humility."

This is indeed a pitiful confession, and every reader of it must be touched to think that so self-confident a nature should have humbled himself to make it. But it is important to notice what actually is confessed. The shameful thing, in the writer's eyes, is that he became the slave of sensations instead of remaining their master. The choice of pleasures was perverse, but perversity in action is on a level with paradox in thought—a merely personal eccentricity. The only confession that touches morals is the single sentence, "I grew careless of the lives of others"—a sentence that everybody must be glad to see; but it stands alone in the volume, and has no justification from the writer's premisses, which, as he says, are frankly "individualistic" and "antinomian."

Wilde gives us the key to his philosophy by a reference to Pater's "Renaissance"—"that book which has had such strange influence over my life." Every cultivated man has read, or heard of, an essay in that volume which placed the ideal of life in ever-fresh sensation, and spoke of the

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formation of habit as failure. Pater lived to regret the writing of that essay, and the more harmful teaching of it he subsequently withdrew; but he could not undo the mischief it had done; and part of that mischief was the influence of the doctrine on the pleasure-loving nature of an undergraduate of genius. Wilde's book makes it abundantly clear that, so far as he had any philosophy at all, it was this philosophy of self-culture by means of ever-fresh sensations. That is really at the bottom of his eloquent praise of "Humility" and "Sorrow." They are new emotions, which he has stupidly neglected till they have been forced upon him; and he discovers how much more refined and sincere they are than the recognised pleasures. A few sentences chosen from different contexts will show how little there is in the book of any fundamental change of view as to the meaning of human life:—

"I would sooner say, or hear it said, of me, that I was so typical a child of my age, that in my perversity, and for that perversity's sake, I turned the good things of my life to evil, and the evil things of life to good."

In this sentence "evil" means what Christians call "deadly sin," the "evil things" are the shame and discomfort of his prison; and they are put on a level.

"While I see that there is nothing wrong in what one does, I see that there is something wrong in what one becomes."

That is to say, in the pursuit of novel sensations care must be taken not to enslave oneself.

"I don't regret for a single moment having lived for pleasure. I did it to the full, as one should do everything that one does. There was no pleasure I did not experience. . . . My only mistake was that I confined myself so exclusively to the trees of what seemed to me the sun-lit side of the garden. . . . But to have continued the same life would have been wrong, because it would have been limiting. I had to pass on. The other half of the garden had its secrets for me also."

In other words, the writer recognises no criterion among sensations except the artistic instinct of what is in good taste and is supposed to make for self-culture; but the apprehension of the meaning of sorrow is as shallow as that of pleasure:—

"I said once to [a friend] that there was enough suffering in one London lane to show that God did not love man. I was entirely wrong. Now it seems to me that love of some kind is the only possible explanation of the extraordinary amount of suffering that there is in the world . . . because in no other way could the soul of man, for whom the world was made, reach the full stature of his perfection."

Does the suffering in a London lane perfect the sufferers? And was Christ misunderstanding the character of the God of Love when He healed the sick?

The second part of the book is a study of the picture of Christ in the Gospels, largely after Renan. A reader accustomed to Wilde's affectations will be uncertain whether it is or is not a record of sincere impressions. Perhaps it is as sincere as anything he wrote could be. The extraordinary thing is how he contrives to find in the Gospels his own Paterian philosophy of life:—

"He was the first person who ever said to people that they should live 'flower-like lives.' He took children as the type of what people should try to become. He held them up as examples to their elders, which I myself have always thought the chief use of children, if what is perfect should have a use. . . . He felt that life was changeable, fluid, active, and that to allow it to be stereotyped into any form was death. [Is this a paraphrase of 'Strait is the gate,' &c.?] . . . His morality is all sympathy, just what morality should be. . . . His justice is all poetical justice, exactly what justice should be. . . . Christ had no patience with the dull, lifeless, mechanical systems that treat people as if they were things, and so treat everybody alike; for Him there were no laws: there were exceptions merely, as if anybody, or anything, for that matter, was like aught else in the world! . . . His chief war was against the Philistines. . . . He preached the enormous importance of living completely for the moment. Those whom He saved from their sins are saved simply for beautiful moments in their lives."

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This view of the Gospel of Christ is sufficiently remote from that taken in "Grace abounding to the chief of sinners," and still more remote is what follows:—

"But it is when He deals with a sinner that Christ is most romantic, in the sense of most real. The world 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. His primary desire was not to reform people any more than His primary desire was to relieve suffering. To turn an interesting thief into a tedious, honest man was not His aim. He would have thought little of the Prisoners' Aid Society and other modern movements of the kind. The conversion of a publican into a Pharisee would not have seemed to Him a great achievement. 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 a very dangerous idea. It is; all great ideas are dangerous. That it was Christ's creed admits of no doubt. That it is the true creed I don't doubt myself."

This is the Wilde to whom the world is accustomed—a maker of paradoxes. It matters nothing to him that the paradox is grotesquely untrue on a matter of vital importance. Is anything important but art, and is not literature art, and paradox the soul of literature? But in what sense is this a voice *de profundis*? We sincerely regret that this book was ever published, because the superficial air of "humility" and compunction which it wears will make its doctrines more likely to find a lodgment in the minds of impressionable and half-educated young men, who feel that there is something rather fine in the artistic pose. We regret still more the way in which the book has been reviewed by many responsible newspapers. A clever writer in an ecclesiastical contemporary devotes two columns and a-half to an enthusiastic eulogy of both the man and his book, without so much as a hint as to his teaching about sin—that it is a "mode of perfection," which surely is a doctrine of devils; and finds the tragedy of his life in the fact that he died so soon after leaving gaol, before his new "discovery of the Man of Sorrows" could clothe itself in new triumphs. As a matter of fact, there was no "discovery of the Man of Sorrows;" Wilde lived several years after leaving gaol; and we do not know that there is any reason to believe his life after he came out to have been materially different from his life before he went in.

The sympathies of the world go out to the Archbishop of Canterbury as it learns that among his multifarious duties has been that of reading, in manuscript, a deplorable book called *De Profundis*, by the late Oscar Wilde. The labour fell to his Grace as a Trustee of the British Museum, which had accepted a gift of the manuscript, subject to a guaranty by the Primate as to the decorum of its contents. Once the initial mistake was made of having anything to do with Wilde's performance, the authorities showed wisdom in getting a sound judgment, and one certain to command universal respect, on the question of propriety. But the Primate surely laid up tribulation for himself and his successors when he suffered this censorship to be laid on him. For what may they not be asked to read in the future? Let any one think of certain novels, abhorred by him as a person of taste, but vastly enjoyed by the million, and let him imagine a very possible tender of the original manuscripts to the institution in Bloomsbury; when the unhappy Archbishop of the day might be assured that a precedent had been definitely established for his perusal of the trash, to see that it was at least conventionally respectable.

26 Nov mter 1914

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26 November 1914

## WOMAN

It is commonly believed that spring, just as it draws up the lovely flowers, also brings down a flood of fiction no less beautiful. But—in a charming phrase—there are springs and springs. This spring is of the inferior kind: not, perhaps, in nature, but in fiction. As to nature, we shall see; for just as Christmas Numbers blossom in the early autumn, so the fictional spring season has passed by before we have got rid of winter. But of books there have been only three this spring:—

“The Golden Bowl,” by Henry James.

“The Secret Woman,” by Eden Phillpotts.

“De Profundis,” by Oscar Wilde.

And it speaks tomes for the enterprise of Messrs. Methuen that all three issue from their press. This is truly an achievement! Of “The Secret Woman” I have already written; it is a fine piece of concentrated gloom. Of “De Profundis,” surely the most poignant of “human documents,” one must write much or nothing. It would be ridiculous to criticise in a few lines this last cry of a fallen genius, which, apart from its human interest, its wonderful freshness of theory, its depth so new to its writer, must for all time stand out as a piece of almost perfect prose. Nor can a minor critic say much of “The Golden Bowl.” One knows the way of Henry James, and one likes it—or does not. With him one must not talk of a plot so much as of a situation. In this case a girl has married a Roman prince, who has an older love in the background. This older love marries the girl's father, and the four live together. From that simple fact flows a broken stream of intrigue so complicated as to baffle all but the most attentive reader. “The Golden Bowl” is like bridge: one does not see everything, and one must follow at least two hypotheses at once. But the effort is repaid by the enjoyment of a comedy subtle beyond the ordinary, and of dialogue that is always entertaining.



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**Bystander.**

**"The Artistic Temperament"** There seems to be a very general tendency to accept "De Profundis" as a genuine human document, the heart-cry of a penitent soul, and not merely a piece of splendid literary simulation. It may be that the wish is father of the thought, for we would all like to think that its author had found in the bitter cup of

sorrow and shame a medicine that purged his soul of vanity and egotism, leaving him humble and contrite. While advancing no opinion on this subject, I may be permitted to point out that grief and repentance have, before now, been expressed in literature without the author either grieving or repenting. What of Verlaine? Here was a man in many ways resembling Wilde, though differing vastly in outward

demeanour. Not even Villon was more abandoned; yet, think of it, some of the finest devotional poetry in the French tongue is from his pen. When he lay for two years in Brussels prison he was in daily converse with the priest, and wrote like a veritable saint. Had he died soon after, he had been remembered as a soul regenerate; but he lived long years of shame with

never an obvious effort to reach up towards any one of the ideals he had sung. The moral seems to be that the artistic temperament may abide willingly with things unlovely.

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MARCH 23, 1905.

CHRISTIAN LEADER

## CAUSERIE.

## Out of the Depths.—II.

Two promises have been made and must now be redeemed. The first was to show the fundamental flaw in the faith expressed in *De Profundis*, and the second was to criticise Pater's teaching—a teaching which he himself abandoned—about culture. But before doing so let us glance at one failure of the book—I mean the failure to comprehend Christ.

There is something wonderful and even touching in the attraction which our Lord had for this forlorn prisoner. The writer is drawn to Christ, interested and perplexed by Him; he feels a compulsion laid on him to understand and explain. Taught by suffering, he penetrates deep into the nature and character of our Lord, about whom he says many things that are true and beautiful. And yet in the end, in spite of all the insight he displays, he fails, and fails lamentably, to comprehend. Art was for him the supreme end, and Christ he looks on as a charming work of art. He calls Renan's *Vie de Jesus* "that gracious fifth gospel." He speaks of Christ as "the precursor of the romantic movement in life." He says:—"The world 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." Here was a man who needed Christ, and surely needed salvation; he came and studied Jesus, and pondered over Him; and yet the one thing he does not see in our Lord is His power to save. Could any failure be more tragic? And his failure can only be attributed to that flaw of which I have spoken.

He speaks of Pater's "Renaissance," the book referred to last week, and he calls it "that book which has had such strange influence over my life." How deeply influenced he was we cannot fail to observe in the following passages: "*My only mistake* was that I confined myself so exclusively to the trees of what seemed to me the sunlit side of the garden"; "*I don't regret for a single moment having lived for pleasure.* I did it to the full, as one should do everything that one does. There was no pleasure I did not experience. I threw the pearl of my soul into a cup of wine. I went down the primrose path to the sound of flutes. I lived on honeycomb. But to have continued the same life would have been wrong, because it would have been limiting"; "The artistic life is simply self-development. Humility in the artist is his frank acceptance of all experiences." I have italicised three phrases in these quotations, because they bring us to the heart of the matter. "I don't regret having lived for pleasure." Here indeed is a prodigal son, new style. The other—Christ's one—had only one confession to make when

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*Christian Leader*  
CHRISTIAN LEADER

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he came to himself: "Father, I have sinned"; but this one justifies himself—he does not regret. Here, then, is the outcome of the teaching of Pater; it has destroyed the sense of sin. The old distinction between right and wrong, a distinction which was the bulwark of the soul's life, has gone, and only art, art for art's sake, remains. Here is the reason why the writer cannot comprehend Christ. The teaching of our Lord is to him "a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument." It never reaches his conscience; for him nothing is right, nothing is wrong. Whatever happens is an experience of the soul, and it is good for the soul to pass through every kind of experience. To taste pleasure is an experience not to be regretted; to go to prison is an experience, not perhaps to be sought, and yet not to be despised. Pater's gospel of culture, by which this man ordered his life, is the quintessence of selfishness, and culture that is so learned ends in corruption. Pater would have been horrified at the thought, which is none the less true, that his teaching had brought about such results. This prison cell was its logical outcome, this ruined life its sufficient condemnation.

Happily we live to-day in a purer atmosphere. We have begun to understand that when he have explained how conscience came to be we are not therefore justified in declaring that it did not come from God. We are busy rediscovering that old distinction between right and wrong, the ignoring of which brings a soul into the depths. We are beginning once more to realise that there are many experiences it is good for man to avoid, and that such experiences leave a stain upon the soul. The apple of the knowledge of good and evil may seem very tempting, but we know now that if we yield to the temptation we must be cast out of Paradise, and find that our way back is barred by the flaming sword. We know now that the word "sin" is not to be explained away, is not so easily expunged from our vocabulary. Over against this man's "I don't regret" we must set the ancient saying, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

I said these causeries were not to be theological in standpoint; some will be saying that I have failed to keep my promise. True, sin is much and often spoken of in theological treatises; but it is also a fact of life; if we leave this fact out of our calculations the answer will always come out wrong. It is sin which brings a man down into the depths; nor can he hope to win his way to the light until he humbly confesses the wrong he has done. For what was it that the soul cried "out of the depths"? "If Thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee." This man cried *De Profundis*; but he sought no forgiveness of sin; and so, although it seems cruel to say it, he failed to comprehend Christ.

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MARCH 24, 1905.

## Essex County Chronicle,

## FOR A QUIET HOUR.

## THE WORLD GRIEF.

BY W. J. DAWSON

I have spoken of the joy of life, of the gladness of a spring morning, and the exhilaration which breathes through the countryside; yet there is a sorrow which fills all the earth, and this the Germans call the world-grief. Our streets are scattered with broken and almost useless lives, our cities echo with the wailings of little children, and in every alley we hear the old haunting cry of woe. This is one of the sides of life which we love least; it is unpleasant—nay, it is even revolting; we shudder and pass on. Those who have heard the cry of the wolf, and have made themselves acquainted with the language of the untamed creatures of the wild, will understand what I mean when I say that the nearer we get to Nature the more do we become aware of the world-grief. Civilisation has done much to make us forget this ancient sorrow—the sorrow which man first felt when he fled from the Garden of Eden; but it cannot blot out from the forehead of Cain the awful symbol of his disgrace. Modern society has agreed to put Cain out of its sight, and thus to forget his existence; it is in our prisons that the world-grief finds its most poignant expression, there where the children of the inherited curse have taken up their abode—those with whom we count it shame to mix.

\* \* \*

I came across this week one of the saddest books which I have ever read. It is the confession of a tortured soul. "De Profundis" begins with the sentence, "Suffering is one very long moment"; but the book goes on to tell us how the day began to dawn, and how in the end the suffering became sanctified. The writer of "De Profundis" is one of the most tragic examples of the world-grief that I know. For in him the pain of unfulfilled ambition, of wasted opportunity, and of impotent despair meet and mingle. How are we to account for these social wrecks which drift by us day after day, rudderless and without purpose—these men within whose hearts the twilight is perpetual and the sun never shines? The writer himself has partially explained this when he says: "Prosperity, pleasure, and success may be rough and common in fibre, but sorrow is the most sensitive of all created things. There is nothing that stirs the whole world of thought to which sorrow does not vibrate in terrible and exquisite pulsation." He holds that to know what real joy is one must understand sorrow, and that it is only when the heart has responded to the agonised cry of a suffering world that life begins to become intelligible. From this it



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follows that the poor in many cases are wiser in their knowledge of mankind than the rich, for their sorrow is greater. "They are more charitable, more kind, more sensitive than we are. In their eyes prison is a tragedy in a man's life, a misfortune, a casualty, something that calls for sympathy in others. They speak of one who is in prison as one who is 'in trouble' simply. It is a phrase they always use, and the expression has the perfect wisdom of love in it."

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Next Oscar Wilde goes on to point out how loveless we of the middle-classes, despite all our affected philanthropy, really are. The wretched man who has fallen, and whom society has punished, is henceforth a pariah and an outcast. All the old friendly doors are shut against him. The face which once welcomed him with a smile is now turned away; a great gulf divides him from all that he once was; and there is no one who will help him to forget his disgrace. How strange it is to hear the brilliant cynic of the play-boards talking thus compassionately of the "submerged tenth," and yet how true are his words! This is what sorrow has done for him—it has taught him some of "the perfect wisdom of love." He, the cultivated genius of his age, the society man, the talented loungeur, has through grief come to see something more beautiful in the tender consideration which exists amongst the poor than in the affected graces of the rich. He overcomes the first bitterness which arose in his heart so that he can at last say: "I am completely homeless and penniless. Yet there are worse things in the world than that. I am quite candid when I say that, rather than go out of this prison with bitterness in my heart against the world, I would gladly and readily beg my bread from door to door. If I could get nothing from the house of the rich I would get something at the house of the poor. Those who have much are often greedy; those who have little always share. I would not a bit mind sleeping in the cool grass in the summer, and when winter came on sheltering myself by the warm, close-thatched cottage, or under the pent-house of a great barn, provided I had love in my heart."

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We are all too ready to forget that there are those who suffer. If by any chance our wandering steps should bring us into the presence of some mean tragedy, our first instinct is to flee back to the paths of ignorance. I sometimes wonder how men can go through life day after day regardless of the awful abyss of pain which surrounds them. Have you never wept when on a bright summer's day the police-van has rattled by with its load of crouching forms on their way to the criminal's cell, whilst you are looking forward to the long, happy days to be spent by the seashore or on the hillside? I can remember occasions on which I have found it necessary to leave the country, where I have been staying for the summer holiday, and to come back to the great sweating city. The memory of the pure mountain air has been with me, and then suddenly within a few hours I have found myself pacing our London streets, watching the pale clerk returning home from the stuffy office to his lonely suburban lodgings, witnessing perhaps the low brawlings of drunken women in the entrance to some slum, hearing the weary cry of a little, half-fed child.

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These are things which we have all felt from time to time, and when one comes across a book which reveals the inner soul of an unfortunate in the way in which "De Profundis" does we are overwhelmed with the awfulness of some men's lot. How are we to face these things frankly and yet live our lives joyously? is the question which faces us. To this my answer is, that the melancholy of the spectacle only lasts so long as one stands by as an idle spectator; so soon as one goes forth to try and alleviate suffering the horror of the surroundings is forgotten in the joy of the work. Not only does one forget the squalor of the slum, the disgrace of the prison-house, and the terror of the asylum when one visits them, but one finds that by a closer contact with pain the world itself becomes more beautiful. Just before his release came Wilde wrote from his cell: "If after I am free a friend of mine gave a feast, and did not invite me, I should not mind a bit. I can be perfectly happy by myself. With freedom, flowers, books, and the moon, who could not be perfectly happy? But if after I am free a friend of mine had a sorrow and refused to allow me to share it I should feel it most bitterly. If he shut the doors of the house of mourning against me, I would come back again and again and beg to be admitted, so that I might share in what I was entitled to share in. If he thought me unworthy, unfit to weep with him, I should feel it as a most poignant humiliation, as the most terrible mode in which disgrace could be inflicted on me." There is no such disgrace as that of being accounted unworthy to share in the world-grief, and there is no greater happiness and no truer honour than that of helping to bind up the wounds of others. The entirely selfish life can never be the really happy life; and thus it comes about that if we treat "De Profundis" as a penitent confession, and not as a merely artistic production, Oscar Wilde was a happier man in the midst of his social disgrace than ever he had been in his pageant days, and this because through suffering he had come to know the world-grief, and had thus discovered that which gave completeness to his life; for, as he himself has beautifully said, "Whatever happens to oneself happens to another," i.e., no man dare live his life as though he were an independent unit, for burdens only become tolerable when they are shared.

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MARCH 25, 1905.

Saturday Review,

"DE PROFUNDIS."

To the Editor of the SATURDAY REVIEW.

Edenham, Bourne, Lincs,

12 March, 1905.

SIR,—The different points of view from which different people consider the same work of art are sometimes amusing, and your correspondent Mr. A. E. Manning-Foster shows in his letter that "De Profundis" has one of the great essentials to a work of art: it is all things to all men. For my part I do not think that Mr. Cunninghame Graham's notice of the book could be improved. Humility is certainly not "the most significant point in the book", the significance attached to it by the author is explained in the following sentences: "Had anyone told me of it, I would have rejected it. Had it been brought to me, I would have refused it.

As I found it, I want to keep it." There could not be a more charming reason. If I were to attempt to find in one phrase of this wonderful book the prevailing note of the whole I should quote the words "God made the world just as much for me as for anyone else".

May I point out, in conclusion, that the description of Renan's "Vie de Jésus" as "that gracious fifth gospel, the gospel according to S. Thomas", seems reminiscent of "la sincérité de la Vie de Jésus faisait penser à une cinquième Évangile, l'Évangile selon Saint Thomas le Douteur"; a phrase which occurs in "La Vie d'Ernest Renan", by Mary James Darmesteter. There are many references to S. Thomas in Wilde's work, but it would be interesting to know that this is only a coincidence.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,  
FREDERIC MANNING.

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