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Oscar Wilde
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Vol. **7**

APRIL 4, 1905.

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EVENING STANDARD

Evening Standard

AND ST. JAMES'S GAZETTE.

"DE PROFUNDIS" CRITICISED.

The merits of Oscar Wilde's "De Profundis" were discussed at St. Ann's Church, Manchester, by the Rev. Paul Bull, in the course of a sermon to men. The preacher did not know why the book was so named, for there was nothing deep in it except the author's profound egotism. It contained the last confessions of a shallow soul. The author said he had surrounded himself "with smaller natures and meaner minds." "I don't think he could," said Mr. Bull. "I cannot conceive how the poor fallen creature could ever speak of other natures and meaner."

2019-03-18

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APRIL 3, 1905.

Manchester

Manchester Evening News, Evening News

DE PROFUNDIS.

"THE CONFESSIONS OF A SHALLOW SOUL."

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April 7, 1905

Church Family Newspaper

Church Family Newspaper,**CANON BEECHING ON SIN.**

PREACHING at Westminster Abbey on Sunday on "The Sinlessness of Christ," Canon Beeching referred to Oscar Wilde's book "De Profundis." "One wonders sometimes," said he "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 to 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 con-sorted 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 him-self 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 realise 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 fertilised by it as by a crop of wild oats; a form of philosophy which Tennyson in "In Memoriam" well characterised as "Precursor 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 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.

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APRIL 7, 1905.

THE RECORD,

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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. Mat. 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 "Procuress 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 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!

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APRIL 8, 1905.

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Hereford Times,

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"DE PROFUNDIS."

To the Editor of the Hereford Times.

Sir,—My mind goes back to the time ten years ago when I used to walk with a friend in the late evening as we talked of the deep things of life. The sound of the sea was in our ears, and as we looked across the bay the twinkling lights of a fishing village gleamed out and the lighthouse flashed its beacon across the waters. We both loved this spot—she with all the sacredness of long association, and I with all the freshness of a new love. Once as our eyes looked out on the scene she observed, "Oscar Wilde says this is the most beautiful bay in the world next to Naples." And because Oscar Wilde had said so, we felt it was true, and loved its beauty the more. It was as if a brilliant star had shone out, and lit up the view with a tender romantic radiance whose glow penetrated the soul and tinted the images there.

But soon came a day when we could only mention Oscar Wilde's name with bated breath, and after that could never speak of him again. It was as if our star had fallen into the sea, and the romantic glow had gone from the bay. The poor star quenched of its light had fallen to the bottom amongst weeds and slime, and had lain there a common mollusc while the cleansing tide passed over it for many a day. What happened? Did the tide lift the star again to its heaven? Impossible. But the ugly mollusc secreted a pearl which has at last been washed to the shore of the bay at our very feet. What is this pearl? Oscar Wilde in "De Profundis" says it is "humility," but we think he is mistaken. Humiliation, though accepted with chastened and even reverent spirit, is not humility. That chief of graces is worn by the pure alone, by those whom we almost worship for saintliness. Oscar Wilde had been humbled like the monarch of old till seven times passed over him, but that which he gained was not the pearl of humility. Was he mistaken in supposing he had found a pearl? By no means, but the pearl was his new self which had been secreted in the darkness and slime, out of the very degradation of its molluscan nature. How it longs to flash and scintillate once more, not comprehending that the chief concern for a pearl is purity.

My copy of "De Profundis" did not reach me until some days after publication. As soon as I saw it announced I went to our chief bookseller, but he had only one copy of the work. This was not for sale, but I was allowed to hold possession of it for a few minutes, and dip into its uncut pages. What I saw made me eagerly anticipate. After a little delay I received my copy, and was soon master of the contents. I say "master," for the writer seemed to me no more than a marvellously gifted and brilliant scholar, advancing all his Greek, Latin, and Hebrew language in his frantic efforts to express himself in English. And it is the soul's mother tongue he needs to learn. He comprehends the character of Christ as few can and do, and yet instead of calling Him Saviour, Friend, Brother, he says that He ranks with the poets. "Shelley and Sophocles are of His company." For whole pages of the work one might fancy oneself reading *Dummond*, and yet he has not learnt to say "Father." He almost horrifies us by saying that he made a mistake in his Oxford days by not choosing to eat the fruit of the trees on the gloomy side of the garden, among which he mentions "despair, remorse that makes one walk on thorns, conscience that condemns, self-abasement that punishes," etc. Then he says that because he refused to taste these he was forced to feed on them continually for a season. He will not see that he chose the self-abasement, and therefore the others became his food.

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It has been pointed out that the whole morbid trend of the book is for self-expression. This may be true, but to me it seems something deeper. Here was a man who had climbed the heights, who had cultivated the powers of his natural being to the supreme point of aestheticism, and yet he fell—because of the height he fell to the depths, because of the shining splendour he was covered with the foulest mire. And then began the purification, at what expense the pages of the book alone can show. The result was a pearl, beautifully white but lifeless. What seemed to him the struggle for self-possession appears to us to be the struggle for birth, or rather regeneration. It is the spirit of the man which as yet refuses to receive from without what it fancies it possesses from within. Is not this the key to the whole failure of the life? It is indeed an unfinished quotation—a "De Profundis." There is no "Glamavi ad te Domine." Perhaps the lesson is being continued on the other side.

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*Church of England Pulpit
and Ecclesiastical Review.*

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WORKS
ORGE
COMPLETE

"DE PROFUNDIS," AND ITS
CRITICS.

Sir,—The pity and sympathy for Oscar Wilde, so freely expressed by some of the critics who have recently reviewed "De Profundis," are surely most mistaken and mischievous. It is difficult for anyone who knows the facts to believe in the sincerity of the author of the above book.

No disgrace, no exposure could have made Wilde repent (for he had long been posing as a degenerate). He repented, or professed to repent, only when he was made to suffer physically by confinement in a jail. In his prison (perhaps fearing that the world might cease to notice him), he wrote, therefore, this egotistical recantation, full of that fatuous vanity which was his distinguishing mental characteristic. After his release from prison it was not shame, it was not suicide, which ended Wilde's life. It was disease. He was mercifully removed by the hand of God. It would have been better if he had never been born.

While he lived, he did an infinite amount of harm, some of which can never be remedied. For many years he and the vile creatures who were his followers and imitators had done their best to make London into a moral cesspool, unfit for decent people to live in. (Let it be well and distinctly understood that I do not speak here of the harmless aesthetes, who were an innocuous, if rather foolish, cult, but of those filthy, shameless, emasculate and idiotic wretches who copied Wilde's sins.)

Through the long period during which the crimes of Wilde and his degenerates were suspected by the world and yet remained unpunished, the loathsome pollution increased, and grew, and spread about like an accursed weed. A moral taint was in the air. It was gradually becoming fashionable to appear to be disgusting. This unnatural and corrupt mental

attitude soon commenced to make its appearance among all classes. Every self-respecting English person was sickened and revolted.

The fame of Wilde and his degenerates now became blazoned abroad on the Continent of Europe. Cartoons about the "English degenerates" appeared in the low illustrated papers of Continental cities, covering the name of "Englishman" with contempt and shame. It was necessary that the thing should end; and, thank God, a man was at last found who had the courage and the influence to end it.

The wretched being who was the centre of corruption was at length brought to justice.

Never did a public benefactor better deserve the thanks and gratitude of Great Britain than did that English nobleman who struck the blow which brought Oscar Wilde to the earth.—Your obedient servant,
BERTRAND SHADWELL.

JULY 6. 1905.

New Age

"DE PROFUNDIS," AND ITS CRITICS.

Sir,—The pity and sympathy for Oscar Wilde, so freely expressed by some of the critics who have recently reviewed "De Profundis," are surely most mistaken and mischievous. It is difficult for anyone who knows the facts to believe in the sincerity of the author of the above book.

No disgrace, no exposure could have made Wilde repent (for he had long been posing as a degenerate). He repented, or professed to repent, only when he was made to suffer physically by confinement in a jail. In his prison (perhaps fearing that the world might cease to notice him), he wrote, therefore, this egotistical recantation, full of that fatuous vanity which was his distinguishing mental characteristic. After his release from prison it was not shame, it was not suicide, which ended Wilde's life. It was disease. He was mercifully removed by the hand of God. It would have been better if he had never been born.

While he lived, he did an infinite amount of harm, some of which can never be remedied. For many years he and the vile creatures who were his followers and imitators had done their best to make London into a moral cesspool, unfit for decent people to live in. (Let it be well and distinctly understood that I do not speak here of the harmless aesthetes, who were an innocuous, if rather foolish, cult, but of those filthy, shameless, emasculate and idiotic wretches who copied Wilde's sins.)

Through the long period during which the crimes of Wilde and his degenerates were suspected by the world and yet remained unpunished, the loathsome pollution increased, and grew, and spread about like an accursed weed. A moral taint was in the air. It was gradually becoming fashionable to appear to be disgusting. This unnatural and corrupt mental

attitude soon commenced to make its appearance among all classes. Every self-respecting English person was sickened and revolted.

The fame of Wilde and his degenerates now became blazoned abroad on the Continent of Europe. Cartoons about the "English degenerates" appeared in the low illustrated papers of Continental cities, covering the name of "Englishman" with contempt and shame. It was necessary that the thing should end; and, thank God, a man was at last found who had the courage and the influence to end it.

The wretched being who was the centre of corruption was at length brought to justice.

Never did a public benefactor better deserve the thanks and gratitude of Great Britain than did that English nobleman who struck the blow which brought Oscar Wilde to the earth.—Your obedient servant,

I have left myself little space in which to write of "De Profundis." And yet there is so much to be said about it. Of course, a great deal *has* been said; badly, injudiciously, and insincerely. It is a pity that we did not have the unmutated manuscript, as it was published in Germany. It is a pity that the publication was not placed in hands that could treat it reverently. I hope it is not libellous to say so, but I should not regard Messrs. Methuen's, a comparatively young house, with a comparatively Nonconformist conscience, as the right medium for giving Oscar Wilde's thoughts in prison, to the English public, that so mistreated him.

In all this poor, brave, mutilated book, the little that has been spared, the keynote struck is the keynote of pity. That such things as were done to Oscar Wilde have been done

"Since man first pent his fellow men
Like beasts, within an iron den,"

failed then, as it fails now, to move the public conscience. When that maniacal genius, who had not fled from a burning city, but stood gazing with the wonder of a startled unbelieving child, as it crashed about his ears, was tried, found guilty, sentenced, there was no voice raised by press or public to question the wisdom of his punishment. His friends ran from him, his enemies hooted, and the herd flung mud, and jeered at that colossal fallen figure. He was a leper, and all who touched him were

affected. That it was disease and not crime for which he paid his terrible penalty was not realized. Perhaps it is hardly realized yet. The dastardly unintelligence of the penal code took from him his chance of recovery. After his wild, mad burst of defiance, he was dazed and overcome, terribly enfeebled and depressed. To cure him, he was left alone with his changed and bewildered self, for hour after crushing hour. To strengthen him, he was given burnt skilly, and his cell became a latrine. When the strength was gone out of him, two planks and a wooden pillow were flung to him, so that he might not rest. He was given tracts that the prison parson had written, so that his mind, no less than his body, should starve.

At least, whatever his crimes, that he had loved the air, the sun, God's sky, the flowers, and grass, was no crime. He was penned in four whitewashed walls; high up, an inaccessible slit showed other prison walls beyond it. This was what was done for his spiritualizing. For his fine hands, that had penned epic, philosophy, poem, and drama, were bundles of tarred oakum. When he failed over his task there was darkness, greater solitude, less food,

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The personal degradation to which he was subjected, the outrages, have made a martyr of him.

His mind was very difficult to kill. We have "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," we have a few paragraphs in the book that is before us, very fine and subtle, very difficult to read unmoved, desperately sad. But his punishment, that punishment which man decreed because God had made him a leper, was, nevertheless, a death sentence, mental as well as physical. And how he died is the disgrace of the century.

"Surely there was a time I might have touched the sunlit slopes,

he wrote.

"And now I have lost my soul's inheritance. Hélas! he said, "Hélas!" and died.

And I, who knew him, though but slightly, in the days of his brilliant boyhood, can but echo, "Hélas!"

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IN THE DEPTHS.

Account of Oscar Wilde's
Life at Reading.

TOLD BY HIS GAOLER.

How the Author Passed His Time
Among the Prisoners.

I never saw a man who looked
with such a wistful eye
Upon that little patch of blue
Which prisoners call the sky;
And at every wandering cloud
That trailed
Its ravelled fleeces by.

Thus in "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," under his prisoner pseudonym of "C. 33," wrote the late Oscar Wilde, whose book, "De Profundis," has just been published, and revealed the secret sorrows and humiliations of one who rightly claimed to have been "a lord of language."

An ex-prison warden who was at Reading Gaol during the entire period of Wilde's incarceration, has further drawn aside the veil that hid the ill-fated man of genius during his degradation and despair "in the depths."

The publication of the posthumous book by the great literary genius, who "sinned and suffered," has induced this warden, who had charge of Oscar Wilde during his imprisonment, to tell "Evening News" readers how that unhappy man of letters "circled the centre of pain," as he in poignant phrase described the daily prison ordeal.

"The warders strutted up and down,
And watched their herd of brutes."

wrote Wilde on his release, and in this fragment of verse can be read his own bitter self-contempt. Of the warders themselves, he made no complaint—he regarded them as simply instruments of an iron, soul-killing system that might be right—or wrong.

Sympathetic Warders.

The warders, on their side, knew how terrible was the punishment the former pampered pet of society must be undergoing, for they could see he was suffering a thousandfold because of his strangely sensitive temperament and previous ignorance of all hardships and iron discipline.

"Poor Wilde," writes his former prison custodian, who is by no means the iron-hearted creature warders are generally supposed to be.

"I remember, before he was transferred from Wandsworth Prison, the governor of Reading Gaol said to us, 'A certain prisoner is about to be transferred here, and you should be proud to think the Prison Commissioners have chosen Reading Gaol as the one most suitable for this man to serve the remainder of his sentence in.'"

"The governor never told us the name, but directly the prisoner arrived, we saw that 'C33' which was his prison letter and number, afterwards made famous by him thus signing the 'Ballad of Reading Gaol,' was none other than Oscar Wilde.

Cause of His Transfer.

"The probable cause of his transfer from Wandsworth Prison was his inability to comply with the regulation tasks allotted to his class of prisoner. On one or two occasions he had been brought up before the governor there for idleness at oakum-picking or talking.

"I remember my first sight of the fallen literary idol of whom all the world was then talking in terms of infamy.

"A tall figure with a large head and fat, pendulous cheeks, with hair that curled artistically, and a hopeless look in his eyes—that was Oscar Wilde as I first met him.

"Not even the hideous prison garb, or 'C 33,' the badge of ignominy he bore could altogether hide the air of distinction and ever-present intellectual force that lifted him always far above 'the herd of brutes,' as he so bitterly afterwards styled his fellow convicts and himself.

"From the first it was apparent to us that he was totally unfitted for manual work, or hardships of any kind, and he was treated accordingly.

"He was no good for anything—except writing, and that, as a rule, has small place inside a prison. But on account of his former greatness a small concession was made him, and he was allowed to read and write as much as he liked.

"A Bundle of Brains."

"Had this boon not been granted him he would, I am confident, have pined away and died. He was so unlike other men. Just a bundle of brains—and that is all.

"When he arrived his hair was long and curly, and it was ordered to be cut at once.

"It fell to my lot as warden in charge to carry out this order and cut his hair, and never shall I forget it.

"To Oscar Wilde it seemed as though the clipping of his locks, and thus placing him on the same level as the closely shorn, bullet-headed prisoners round him was the last drop in the cup of sorrow and degradation which he had to drain to the bitter dregs.

"Must it be cut,' he cried piteously to me. 'You don't know what it means to me, and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"It may seem somewhat ludicrous to some who do not know, as I do, what a curiously constituted character was that of Oscar Wilde, but I know it cut me to the heart to have to be the person to cause him his crowning shame. Warders have feelings, although their duty will not always allow them to show it.

1 MARCH, 1905

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"The only task Wilde was put to was to act as 'schoolmaster's orderly,' which was in the nature of a great privilege, for it meant that he could take charge of the books and go round with them to other prisoners, besides having the pick of the literature for himself. Strange as it may seem considering his literary bent, he failed to accomplish even this task satisfactorily.

With His Books.

Chiefly he remained in his cell occupied with his books, of which in his cell he had a large supply, consisting of poetic works and foreign authors. On his table was always a manuscript book—full of writing in some foreign language—French or Italian I believe, and Wilde often seemed busily engaged writing in this.

"I think this must have been 'De Profundis'—the work of self-analysis that has just been published.

"His hair was always kept closely cut until about five months before his discharge, and I remember when he was told that it need not be prison-cropped any more owing to his impending release, how pleased he seemed. And he was a man who so seldom lifted his bowed head of shame to smile.

"Wilde was superstitious to a degree, and I recall one striking incident that proved his superstitious fears to be well grounded.

"I was sweeping the walls of his cell, for he seldom followed the prison regulations with regard to scrupulously cleansing his cell daily, and I disturbed a spider which darted across the floor.

"As it made off I raised my foot and killed it, when I saw Wilde looking at me with eyes of horror.

"Bringing Bad Luck."

"It brings bad luck to kill a spider,' he said. 'I shall hear worse news than any I have yet heard.'

"At the time I paid little attention to it, but the following morning he received the news that his mother, whom he had deeply loved and honoured, had died, and that his shame had hastened her end."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

MARCH 2,

(Continued from yesterday.)

IN THE DEPTHS.

"The Saddest Story of Oscar Wilde, Prisoner."

WARDER'S HISTORY

Of the Author's Life and Experiences in Reading Gaol.

In yesterday's "Evening News" were given the recollections of an ex-prison warden who was at Reading Gaol during the whole period of the late Oscar Wilde's imprisonment. To-day he has further drawn aside the veil that hid the ill-fated man of genius during his degradation and despair "in the depths."

"The saddest story I know of Wilde was one day when his solicitor called to see him to get his signature, I think, to some papers in the divorce proceedings then being instituted by his wife—a suit which, of course, Wilde did not defend.

"Unknown to Wilde his wife had accompanied the solicitor, but she did not wish her husband to see her.

"The interview with the solicitor took place in the consultation room, and Wilde sat at a table with his head on his hands opposite the lawyer.

"Outside, in the passage with me, waited a sad figure in the deepest mourning. It was Mrs. Wilde—in tears.

"Whilst the consultation was proceeding in the 'solicitor's room,' Mrs. Wilde turned to me and begged a favour. 'Let me have one glimpse of my husband,' she said, and I could not refuse her.

Her Last Look.

"So silently I stepped on one side, and Mrs. Wilde cast one long lingering glance inside, and saw the convict-poet, who, in deep mental distress himself, was totally unconscious that any eyes save those of the stern lawyer and myself witnessed his degradation.

"A second later, Mrs. Wilde, apparently labouring under deep emotion, drew back, and left the prison with the solicitor.

"I fancy Wilde, when she saw him, was putting the final signature to the divorce papers, and I do not know if she ever saw her unhappy husband again. I do not think she ever did.

"At exercise, when he tramped what he called 'The Fools' Parade' with his companions of 'The Devil's Own Brigade,' he would pace along with bended head as though deep in thought, and usually muttering snatches of prose or verse from his favourite authors.

"The monotony of the life seemed appalling to Wilde, and when he was released he wrote, you remember:

I know not whether laws be right
Or whether laws be wrong;
All that we know who be in gaol
Is that the walls are strong,
And that each day is like a year,
A year whose days are long.

"I have good reason to know that Oscar Wilde was satisfied with the way two of the warders treated him.

"After his release he sent us through the Governor copies of his soul-stirring poem, 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol.'

"My copy is inscribed 'From his friend, the author, Naples, February 1898.'

"You remember the masterly way in which Wilde worked out the theme of that wonderful poem which told of the last days in prison of Trooper C. T. Woolridge, of the Royal Horse Guards, who was hanged for the murder of his wife at Clewer, near Windsor.

A Terrible Moment.

"Wilde, of course, never saw the murderer after his condemnation, but he heard the bell tolling for the execution, and it made a terrible impression on his mind.

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MARCH 3.

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GRIM PRESENTIMENT.

Evening News

How Oscar Wilde's High Spirits Alternated With Depression.

Over the superscription "A." a correspondent of the "St. James's Gazette" tells how he last saw Oscar Wilde—and took him to dinner at the Grand Café, in Paris—three months before the ill-fated author's death.

"Mr. Wilde was perfectly well, and in the highest spirits. All through dinner he kept me delighted, but afterwards became rather depressed.

"He actually told me that he didn't think he was going to live long; he had a presentiment, he said. I tried to turn it off into a joke, but he was quite serious.

"'Somehow,' he said, 'I don't think I shall live to see the new century. If I did, it would be really more than the English could stand.'

"Just before he died he came to, after long unconsciousness, and said to a friend by his bedside, 'I have had a dreadful dream; I dreamt that I dined with the dead.'

"'My dear Oscar,' replied his friend, 'I am sure you were the life and soul of the party.' 'Really, you are sometimes very witty,' answered Wilde, and I believe those are his last recorded words."

"He wrote:—

The memory of Dreadful Things
Rushed like a dreadful wind,
And Horror stalked before each man,
And Terror crept behind.
The warders with their shoes of felt
Crept by each padlocked door,
And peeped and saw with eyes of awe
Grey figures on the floor,
And wondered why men knelt to pray
Who never prayed before.

"Wilde told me that those moments when the bell rang out, and his imagination conjured up the execution scene, were the most awful of a time rich in horrors.

"I always found Wilde extremely good-natured, and he wrote several little things out for me.

"I had recently been married, and a certain weekly paper offered a silver tea service to the young couple who could give the best reason why this service should be given to them.

"I told Wilde of this, and he wrote out several witty 'reasons,' which I have kept.

"Here are some, very apt, that should have secured the tea service:—

- (1) Because evidently spoons are required, and my girl and I are two.
- (2) Because it would suit us to a T (tea).
- (3) Because we have good "grounds" for wanting a coffee pot.
- (4) Because marriage is a game that should begin with a love set.
- (5) Because one cannot get legally married without a proper wedding service.

DAILY CHRONICLE.

Daily Chronicle

MARCH 15,

A correspondent, writing to us as the "leading literary newspaper," says:—

May I ask to ventilate a small grievance through your columns? Has not the time come, having regard to the revival of his plays and to the fact that the papers no longer refer mysteriously to "the unhappy author of So-and-so," when admirers of Oscar Wilde's genius and wit should be able to purchase his works at a reasonable price? . . . Could not a new edition of his books be issued?

APRIL 26, 1905.

With the reading of "De Profundis" London seems to have decided to pass the sponge over the last disgrace of Oscar Wilde, and remember only his brilliant achievement. Copies of his books and of the magazines that contain his papers are rising in value. And now the New Stage Club announces two private performances of "Salome"—the drama which Aubrey Beardsley illustrated when it was first published. The censor has not passed it; so that those who wish to see it at the Bijou Theatre on May 10 or May 13 must send their subscriptions in advance.

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"Mr. Wilde was perfectly well, and in the highest spirits. All through dinner he kept me delighted, but afterwards became rather depressed.

"He actually told me that he didn't think he was going to live long; he had a presentiment, he said. I tried to turn it off into a joke, but he was quite serious.

"'Somehow,' he said, 'I don't think I shall live to see the new century. If I did, it would be really more than the English could stand.'

"Just before he died he came to, after long unconsciousness, and said to a friend by his bedside, 'I have had a dreadful dream; I dreamt that I dined with the dead.'

"'My dear Oscar,' replied his friend, 'I am sure you were the life and soul of the party.' 'Really, you are sometimes very witty,' answered Wilde, and I believe those are his last recorded words."

"He wrote:—

The memory of Dreadful Things
Pushed like a dreadful wind,
And Horror stalked before each man,
And Terror crept behind,
The warders with their shoes of felt
Crept by each padlocked door,
And peeped and saw with eyes of awe
Grey figures on the floor,
And wondered why men knelt to pray
Who never prayed before.

"Wilde told me that those moments when the bell rang out, and his imagination conjured up the execution scene, were the most awful of a time rich in horrors.

"I always found Wilde extremely good-natured, and he wrote several little things out for me.

"I had recently been married, and a certain weekly paper offered a silver tea service to the young couple who could give the best reason why this service should be given to them.

"I told Wilde of this, and he wrote out several witty 'reasons,' which I have kept.

"Here are some, very apt, that should have secured the tea service:—

(1) Because evidently spoons are required, and my girl and I are two.

(2) Because it would suit us to a T (tea).

(3) Because we have good "grounds" for wanting a coffee pot.

(4) Because marriage is a game that should be played with a love set.

(5) Because one cannot get legally married without a proper wedding service.

MARCH 15,

A correspondent, writing to us as the "leading literary newspaper," says:—

May I ask to ventilate a small grievance through your columns? Has not the time come, having regard to the revival of his plays and to the fact that the papers no longer refer mysteriously to "the unhappy author of So-and-so," when admirers of Oscar Wilde's genius and wit should be able to purchase his works at a reasonable price? . . . Could not a new edition of his books be issued?

APRIL 26, 1905.

With the reading of "De Profundis" London seems to have decided to pass the sponge over the last disgrace of Oscar Wilde, and remember only his brilliant achievement. Copies of his books and of the magazines that contain his papers are rising in value. And now the New Stage Club announces two private performances of "Salome"—the drama which Aubrey Beardsley illustrated when it was first published. The censor has not passed it; so that those who wish to see it at the Bijou Theatre on May 10 or May 13 must send their subscriptions in advance.

DAILY CHRONICLE,
MARCH 3, 1905.

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 Oscar Wilde's posthumous book, "De Profundis," a copy of which he had brought with him into the pulpit.

MARCH 4,

SURVEY OF THE PRESS.

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 faithful friend has his.—Mr. Cunninghame Graham in the "Saturday Review."

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