

Jissen Women's University Rare Books
Honma Hisao Collection

Digital Archives of Mason Library

Oscar Wilde
Scrapbook

Vol. **7**

a word of remorse for the wrong he had done others, for the other lives that he had helped to ruin.

It is surprising, then, that "Viator" has not challenged Oscar Wilde's own claim to have discovered and accepted humility. True, he had discovered that "where there is sorrow there is holy ground." But it must be added that his egoism succeeded in almost completely driving out "the holy thing" from the heart of sorrow. Greater arrogance of tone and greater censoriousness in the expression of his new-found insight—and that in a region, the ethical, which he made it his boast that he had had no eye for, no interest in—can hardly be imagined. His perception of humility, or rather of the beauty in the subdued hues of sorrow, was mainly an æsthetic and self-regarding one; it lacked ethical quality; it did not carry his soul out of itself towards One in whose sight he had supreme cause "to abhor himself" in dust and ashes; his "call out of the depths" was not to a Creator whose gifts, in what he loves to style "my own genius," he had so scandalously squandered and perverted—but simply to himself and his fellow-creatures, whom he would educate or win over to fuller justice to himself. Here lies the utter and unrelieved sadness of the book, the unconsciousness of the man who had scorned the ethical side of life, that humility is an ethical grace and appears in reality and truth only in him who submits himself unreservedly to the Supreme, as unworthy of His pure regard, and thinks not of comparing his chastened self with others, be they who they may. Missing this, Oscar Wilde's so-called humility was no humility worthy the name. It was a better mood than his former one, the mood of "the shaded side of the garden," rather than that of the garish day in which he had used to disport himself with his own and others' souls; yet, alas, it was but a mood, not a moral renunciation and renewal of will, and therefore not a regeneration.

Hence those judge superficially who, like a writer in the "Hibbert Journal," have called the experience described in "De Profundis" "the birth of a soul." Even the reviewer in question adds, with reference to Wilde's so tragically short career after leaving Reading Gaol, "its life was short, and there is sad reason to fear that even before the close Wilde had slid far back towards the gulf from which he had emerged." With far truer insight does "Viator" urge that he never emerged from it as a new moral personality—he himself scoffed at the idea—but rather tried to light up the abyss of disgrace and suffering, when there came to him a kind of calm that took from it the look of despair, with fairy lamps of his own making and for his own further culture. There are in the book other and

a word of remorse for the wrong he had done others, for the other lives that he had helped to ruin.

It is surprising, then, that "Viator" has not challenged Oscar Wilde's own claim to have discovered and accepted humility. True, he had discovered that "where there is sorrow there is holy ground." But it must be added that his egoism succeeded in almost completely driving out "the holy thing" from the heart of sorrow. Greater arrogance of tone and greater censoriousness in the expression of his new-found insight—and that in a region, the ethical, which he made it his boast that he had had no eye for, no interest in—can hardly be imagined. His perception of humility, or rather of the beauty in the subdued hues of sorrow, was mainly an æsthetic and self-regarding one; it lacked ethical quality; it did not carry his soul out of itself towards One in whose sight he had supreme cause "to abhor himself" in dust and ashes; his "call out of the depths" was not to a Creator whose gifts, in what he loves to style "my own genius," he had so scandalously squandered and perverted—but simply to himself and his fellow-creatures, whom he would educate or win over to fuller justice to himself. Here lies the utter and unrelieved sadness of the book, the unconsciousness of the man who had scorned the ethical side of life, that humility is an ethical grace and appears in reality and truth only in him who submits himself unreservedly to the Supreme, as unworthy of His pure regard, and thinks not of comparing his chastened self with others, be they who they may. Missing this, Oscar Wilde's so-called humility was no humility worthy the name. It was a better mood than his former one, the mood of "the shaded side of the garden," rather than that of the garish day in which he had used to disport himself with his own and others' souls; yet, alas, it was but a mood, not a moral renunciation and renewal of will, and therefore not a regeneration.

Hence those judge superficially who, like a writer in the "Hibbert Journal," have called the experience described in "De Profundis" "the birth of a soul." Even the reviewer in question adds, with reference to Wilde's so tragically short career after leaving Reading Gaol, "its life was short, and there is sad reason to fear that even before the close Wilde had slid far back towards the gulf from which he had emerged." With far truer insight does "Viator" urge that he never emerged from it as a new moral personality—he himself scoffed at the idea—but rather tried to light up the abyss of disgrace and suffering, when there came to him a kind of calm that took from it the look of despair, with fairy lamps of his own making. There is no further culture. There are in the book other and

deeper tones than this, and many exquisite passages expressive of things seen in glimpses; but it is to be feared that the underlying bent of the whole is egoistic—touched with nobler instincts, indeed, but unchanged at the heart of it.

We have said little of the immense literary excellence of this book, because the interest of the human drama overshadows all else.

"De Profundis" is one of the most moving revelations of morbid psychology of our own day or any day. But morbid its psychology is, though that of a Titanic nature. There are throes and cries that point towards life; but the issue, so far as here revealed, is not life; for self remains his real centre.

VERNON BARTLET.

Church Times.

January 19, 1906.

WRITERS AND BOOKS.

READERS of the exploring sort and some others will remember the extraordinary book in which a notorious man of letters, suffering imprisonment for a gross offence, described his discovery of the grace of humility. It is not a characteristic grace of Englishmen. That is, perhaps, the reason why the English Church has done so little in the way of Ascetic Theology, or the literature of pure devotion. We are almost wholly dependent on translations of foreign writers. The greater among these are not likely to be rivalled, and their works are the indispensable possession of the Church at all times and in all places. But a modest attempt to walk in the same way, made by one of ourselves, is none the less welcome; and such is Mr. Brett's devotional treatise on humility. Its value can be tested only in use. It is not his first attempt, and he has learnt to speak with those accents of experimental certainty which are necessary for his purpose. His help may well be tried.

deeper tones than this, and many exquisite passages expressive of things seen in glimpses; but it is to be feared that the underlying bent of the whole is egoistic—touched with nobler instincts, indeed, but unchanged at the heart of it.

We have said little of the immense literary excellence of this book, because the interest of the human drama overshadows all else.

“De Profundis” is one of the most moving revelations of morbid psychology of our own day or any day. But morbid its psychology is, though that of a Titanic nature. There are throes and cries that point towards life; but the issue, so far as here revealed, is not life; for self remains his real centre.

Jissen 2019-03-16 Over 303 Library

VERNON DANIELT.

Church Times.

January 19, 1906.

WRITERS AND BOOKS.

READERS of the exploring sort and some others will remember the extraordinary book in which a notorious man of letters, suffering imprisonment for a gross offence, described his discovery of the grace of humility. It is not a characteristic grace of Englishmen. That is, perhaps, the reason why the English Church has done so little in the way of Ascetic Theology, or the literature of pure devotion. We are almost wholly dependent on translations of foreign writers. The greater among these are not likely to be rivalled, and their works are the indispensable possession of the Church at all times and in all places. But a modest attempt to walk in the same way, made by one of ourselves, is none the less welcome; and such is Mr. Brett's devotional treatise on humility. Its value can be tested only in use. It is not his first attempt, and he has learnt to speak with those accents of experimental certainty which are necessary for his purpose. His help may well be tried.

Brotherhood.

Vol. XIX. No. 1. JULY, 1905. Price Threepence.

"Out of the Depths."

"De Profundis." By Oscar Wilde. Methuen and Company, 36 Essex Street, Strand, London, W.C.

This book was written during the latter part of the author's imprisonment, and contains the thought and the emotion ripened by much suffering.

It would be difficult to extract from it a quite self-consistent theory of sin and penitence, for Oscar Wilde was not a scientific thinker, but essentially an artist, and by profession an artistic literary worker whose materials were sentiments and words.

Some extravagant and startling and possibly dangerous statements of his about sin's place and function in the scheme of things should probably be taken rather as expressions of an artist's moods than as accurate statements of carefully thought-out conclusions; and, in fact, they do not harmonise with the same artist's deeper moods.

So far as one can gather it and piece it together, his thought about sin included three points:

1. There is nothing wrong in what one does; but there is something wrong in what one becomes. Whatever may be the form one's sin takes, it is a damage done to oneself. "This pitiless indictment," he says, "I bring without pity against myself. Terrible as was what the world did to me, what I did to myself was far more terrible still."

Brotherhood.

Vol. XIX. No. 1.

JULY, 1905.

Price Threepence.

“Out of the Depths.”

“De Profundis.” By Oscar Wilde. Methuen and Company, 36 Essex Street, Strand, London, W.C.

This book was written during the latter part of the author's imprisonment, and contains the thought and the emotion ripened by much suffering.

It would be difficult to extract from it a quite self-consistent theory of sin and penitence, for Oscar Wilde was not a scientific thinker, but essentially an artist, and by profession an artistic literary worker whose materials were sentiments and words.

Some extravagant and startling and possibly dangerous statements of his about sin's place and function in the scheme of things should probably be taken rather as expressions of an artist's moods than as accurate statements of carefully thought-out conclusions; and, in fact, they do not harmonise with the same artist's deeper moods.

So far as one can gather it and piece it together, his thought about sin included three points:

1. There is nothing wrong in what one does; but there is something wrong in what one becomes. Whatever may be the form one's sin takes, it is a damage done to oneself. “This pitiless indictment,” he says, “I bring without pity against myself. Terrible as was what the world did to me, what I did to myself was far more terrible still.”

BROTHERHOOD.

2. The reckless pursuit of pleasure—sin—leads to sorrow. But not sin only. "The gods are strange," he says, "and punish us for what is good and humane in us as much as for what is evil and perverse."

This is one of the inaccuracies and superficialities of the book. True it is that even the humane suffer, and that they are brought to suffering by their very humaneness. But their suffering cannot accurately be called punishment. The tastes of those two kinds of suffering are opposite to each other.

3. Somehow, both sin and sorrow are worth while. When the sinner is brought to repentance, sin and sorrow are changed. "I have got," says Oscar Wilde, the convict, "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, the harsh orders that routine seems to necessitate, the dreadful dress that makes sorrow grotesque to look at, the silence, the solitude, the shame—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."

This view, which the prisoner got in his lonely cell—that not even sin, the most reckless, is an irremediable disaster, that it is no reason for despair, that by the spiritual alchemy of genuine repentance it is changed into an experience in the long run fruitful—is comforting, hope-inspiring, stimulating, redemptive. But it needs to be carefully balanced by this other truth, which "De Profundis" does not make so clear: that, on any plane where there still seems to be a better and a worse, on any plane of finite consciousness and personal experience, on any plane where there are joy and sorrow over against each other, for a person's development as well as for his peace it is always better to have resisted a temptation, how hard soever the struggle, than to have yielded to it—provided, indeed, he do not in escaping from one sin tumble into another.

BROTHERHOOD.

There might be no advantage in escaping the sin of the publican and the profligate if one became instead a hard and cold Pharisee.

On the whole, the book, in spite of defects and one-sidedness, makes for a sane life, a life of humility and world-wide compassion. And it contains many passages of singular unconventional instructiveness, as well as of singular beauty.

WHAT REACHES THE HEART.

"Where there is sorrow, there is holy ground," writes this author in his sorrow. "Some day people will realise what that means. They will know nothing of life till they do." Then he tells of the gracious conduct of one friend of his who had a nature fit to realise the sacredness of even a wrong-doer's sorrow. "When I was brought down," he says, "from my prison to the Court of Bankruptcy, between two policemen," this friend "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. . . . It was in this spirit, and with this mode of love, that the saints knelt down to wash the feet of the poor, or stooped to kiss the leper on the cheek. . . . I store his action in the treasure-house of my heart. . . . It is embalmed and kept sweet by the myrrh and cassia of many tears. When wisdom has been profitless to me, philosophy barren, and the proverbs and phrases of those who have sought to give me consolation as dust and ashes in my mouth, the memory of that little, lovely, silent act of love has unsealed for me all the wells of pity, made the desert blossom like a rose, and brought me out of the bitterness of lonely exile into harmony with the wounded, broken, and great heart of the world."

I do not say that there was nothing of God, nothing of the divine humanity, in those who, in indignation which they felt to be righteous, got that poor perverse voluptuary convicted and made of him a public example. It is better that men, themselves

BROTHERHOOD.

not guiltless, should be angry, and even vindictive, against other men's vices, than that they should be utterly indifferent to the corruption of morals. But I venture to affirm that, in the heart and the conduct of the friend who was not alienated by his friend's moral malady and madness, who retained his respect for the brother fallen low, and who could salute the divine humanity in him as reverently as ever, the All-Holy, whose name is Love, was in a higher degree expressed than in the most respectable of those who could see only the sinner and the shame. In the evolution of morals it may be that even the hard and harsh who judge and punish have a place and function; but far mightier and far subtler to invade and cleanse and humble sinful hearts is the forgiving love that never faileth and covers a multitude of sins.

In this connection another striking passage deserves to be quoted, illustrating the marvellous transforming power of kindness.

"For the last seven or eight months, in spite of a succession of great troubles reaching me from the outside world almost without intermission, I have been placed in direct contact with a new spirit working in this prison through man and things, that has helped me beyond any possibility of expression in words: so that while for the first year of my imprisonment I did nothing else, and can remember doing nothing else, but wring my hands in impotent despair and say, 'What an ending, what an appalling ending!' now I try to say to myself, and sometimes do really and sincerely say, 'What a beginning, what a wonderful beginning!' It may really be so. It may become so. If it does I shall owe much to this new personality that has altered every man's life in this place. You may realise it when I say that had I been released last May, as I tried to be, I should have left this place loathing it and every official in it with a bitterness of hatred that would have poisoned my life. I have had a year longer of imprisonment, but humanity has been in the prison along with us all, and now when I go out I shall always remember great kindnesses that I have received from almost everybody, and on the day of

BROTHERHOOD.

my release I shall give many thanks to many people, and ask to be remembered by them in turn. The prison style is absolutely and entirely wrong. I would give anything to be able to alter it when I go out. I intend to try. But there is nothing in the world so wrong but that the spirit of humanity, which is the spirit of love, the spirit of the Christ who is not in churches, may make it, if not right, at least possible to be borne without too much bitterness of heart."

A GLIMPSE OF CHRIST.

The mightiest of the influences that changed the prisoner's heart was what came to him through reading the Gospels. He managed to get hold of a Greek Testament, and every morning, after he had cleaned his cell and polished his tins, he used to read a little of the Gospels. The English version had become spoiled for him, as for so many others, by being heard read too often and too badly, but returning to the Greek was, he says, "like going into a garden of lilies out of some narrow and dark house."

The vision he got of Jesus Christ was perhaps too much an artist's vision. It certainly would not satisfy the tests of the orthodox theologian. But it was to him convincing, persuasive, and potent.

"Nor in Aeschylus," he writes, "nor Dante, those stern masters of tenderness, in Shakespeare, the most purely human of all the great artists, in the whole Celtic myth and legend, where the loveliness of the world is shown through a mist of tears, and the life of man is no more than the life of a flower, is there anything that, for sheer simplicity of pathos wedded and made one with sublimity of tragic effect, can be said to equal or even approach the last act of Christ's passion. The little supper with his companions, one of whom had already sold him for a price; the anguish in the quiet moon-lit garden; the false friend coming close to him so as to betray him with a kiss; the friend who still believed in him, and on whom, as on a rock, he had hoped to build a house of refuge for Man, denying him as the bird cried to the dawn; his own utter

BROTHERHOOD.

loneliness, his submission, his acceptance of everything; and, along with it all, such scenes as the high priest of orthodoxy rending his raiment in wrath, and the magistrate of civil justice calling for water in the vain hope of cleansing himself of that stain of innocent blood that makes him the scarlet figure of history; the coronation ceremony of sorrow, one of the most wonderful things in the whole of recorded time; the crucifixion of the Innocent One before the eyes of his mother and of the disciple whom he loved; the soldiers gambling and throwing dice for his clothes; the terrible death by which he gave the world its most eternal symbol; and his final burial in the tomb of the rich man, his body swathed in Egyptian linen with costly spices and perfumes as though he had been a king's son.

"Yet the whole life of Christ—so entirely may sorrow and beauty be made one in their meaning and manifestation—is really an idyll, though it ends with the veil of the temple being rent, and the darkness coming over the face of the earth, and the stone rolled to the door of the sepulchre. One always thinks of him as a young bridegroom with his companions, as indeed he somewhere describes himself; as a shepherd straying through a valley with his sheep in search of green meadow or cool stream; as a singer trying to build out of the music the walls of the City of God; or as a lover for whose love the whole world was too small. His miracles seem to me to be as exquisite as the coming of spring, and quite as natural. I see no difficulty at all in believing that such was the charm of his personality that his mere presence could bring peace to souls in anguish, and that those who touched his garments or his hands forgot their pain; or that as he passed by on the highway of life people who had seen nothing of life's mystery saw it clearly, and others who had been deaf to every voice but that of pleasure heard for the first time the voice of love and found it as 'musical as Apollo's lute'; or that evil passions fled at his approach, and men whose dull, unimaginative lives had been but a mode of death rose as it were from the grave when

BROTHERHOOD.

he called them; or that when he taught on the hillside the multitude forgot their hunger and thirst and the cares of this world, and that to his friends who listened to him as he sat at meat the coarse food seemed delicate, and the water had the taste of good wine, and the whole house became full of the odour and sweetness of nard."

Here are some words full of a deep insight:

"Pity Christ has, of course, for the poor, for those who are shut up in prisons, for the lowly, for the wretched; but he has far more pity for the rich, for the hard hedonists, for those who waste their freedom in becoming slaves to things, for those who wear soft raiment and live in king's houses. Riches and pleasure seemed to him to be really greater tragedies than poverty or sorrow. . . . In his entreaty to the young man, 'Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor,' it is not of the state of the poor he is thinking, but of the soul of the young man, the soul that wealth was marring. . . . He treated worldly success as a thing absolutely to be despised. He saw nothing in it at all. He looked on wealth as an encumbrance to a man."

SAVED FROM BITTERNESS.

There is no subject about which a greater change is wrought in the mind through the soul's growth and the enlightening and ripening discipline of sorrow, than is frequently wrought concerning the mystery of pain. Oscar Wilde tells us that on one occasion, talking to a lady who did much to help him, he said "that there was enough suffering in one narrow London lane to show that God did not love man, and that wherever there was any sorrow, though but that of a child in some little garden weeping over a fault that it had or had not committed, the whole face of creation was completely marred." He found out that therein he was entirely wrong. The lady told him so at the time he uttered the sentiment, but he could not believe her. "I was not in the sphere," he says, "in which such belief was to be attained to. Now it seems to me

BROTHERHOOD.

that love of some kind is the only possible explanation of the extraordinary amount of suffering that there is in the world. I cannot conceive of any other explanation. I am convinced that there is no other, and that if the world has 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. . . . When I say that I am convinced of these things I speak with too much pride. Far off, like a perfect pearl, one can see the City of God. It is so wonderful that it seems as if a child could reach it in a summer's day. And so a child could. But with me and such as me it is different. One can realise a thing in a single moment, but one loses it in the long hours that follow with leaden feet. It is so difficult to keep 'heights that the soul is competent to gain.'"

Whatever there may have remained of confusion of thought in Oscar Wilde's mind, whatever of sentiment that may seem doubtful and dangerous to some, if the moral attitude expressed in this book was genuinely his (and there is no ground for suspecting it to have been a mere artistic pose), he experienced during his long, weary imprisonment a very great and precious beginning of salvation. "The first thing I have got to do," he writes in view of his nearing release, "is to free myself from any possible bitterness of feeling against the world. I am completely penniless and absolutely homeless. Yet there are worse things in the world than that. I am quite candid when I say that rather than go out from this prison with bitterness in my heart against the world, I would gladly and readily beg my bread from door to door. I would not a bit mind sleeping in the cool grass in summer, and, when winter came on, sheltering myself by the warm, close-thatched rick, or under the penthouse of a great barn, provided I had love in my heart. . . . Were there not a single house open to me in pity, had I to accept the wallet and ragged cloak of sheer penury, as long as I am free from all resentment, hardness and scorn, I should be able to face the

BROTHERHOOD.

life with much more calm and confidence than I should were my body in purple and fine linen, and the soul within me sick with hate."

The sinner who, having been made to drink a cup of bitterness, is free from resentment, and desires only to be filled with pure love, has begun already—whatever there may still lie before him of stumbling and failure and suffering—to taste the cup of blessedness.



Notice.

This number is the first of the series of quarterly issues of "Brotherhood." The next number will be published on October 14th, and following numbers on the 15th (or when the 15th falls on a Sunday, the 14th) of October, January, and April. The reason for publishing in the middle of a month rather than at the beginning or the end is that printers usually have less to do in the first half of each month than in the second.

The price of each number is still 3d.; by post, 3½d.

Booksellers and newsvendors will still be able as heretofore to get copies from the publishers and from wholesale agents; but, as the demand is not likely to be large in any particular place, few of them, we suppose, will take the trouble to have "Brotherhood" regularly in stock. Readers who wish to have a copy of each issue as soon as it is published will probably find it most satisfactory to send an annual subscription of 1s. 2d., direct to the publishers, and thus get their copy through the post.

Communications intended for the Editor should be sent to
J. BRUCE WALLACE,
Mansfield House University Settlement,
Canning Town, London, E.

Business communications should be addressed to the Publisher,
F. R. HENDERSON,
26, Paternoster Square, London, E.C.

BROTHERHOOD.

2. The reckless pursuit of pleasure—sin—leads to sorrow. But not sin only. "The gods are strange," he says, "and punish us for what is good and humane in us as much as for what is evil and perverse."

This is one of the inaccuracies and superficialities of the book. True it is that even the humane suffer, and that they are brought to suffering by their very humaneness. But their suffering cannot accurately be called punishment. The tastes of those two kinds of suffering are opposite to each other.

3. Somehow, both sin and sorrow are worth while. When the sinner is brought to repentance, sin and sorrow are changed. "I have got," says Oscar Wilde, the convict, "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, the harsh orders that routine seems to necessitate, the dreadful dress that makes sorrow grotesque to look at, the silence, the solitude, the shame—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."

This view, which the prisoner got in his lonely cell—that not even sin, the most reckless, is an irremediable disaster, that it is no reason for despair, that by the spiritual alchemy of genuine repentance it is changed into an experience in the long run fruitful—is comforting, hope-inspiring, stimulating, redemptive. But it needs to be carefully balanced by this other truth, which "De Profundis" does not make so clear: that, on any plane where there still seems to be a better and a worse, on any plane of finite consciousness and personal experience, on any plane where there are joy and sorrow over against each other, for a person's development as well as for his peace it is always better to have resisted a temptation, how hard soever the struggle, than to have yielded to it—provided, indeed, he do not in escaping from one sin tumble into another.

BROTHERHOOD.

There might be no advantage in escaping the sin of the publican and the profligate if one became instead a hard and cold Pharisee.

On the whole, the book, in spite of defects and one-sidedness, makes for a sane life, a life of humility and world-wide compassion. And it contains many passages of singular unconventional instructiveness, as well as of singular beauty.

WHAT REACHES THE HEART.

"Where there is sorrow, there is holy ground," writes this author in his sorrow. "Some day people will realise what that means. They will know nothing of life till they do." Then he tells of the gracious conduct of one friend of his who had a nature fit to realise the sacredness of even a wrong-doer's sorrow. "When I was brought down," he says, "from my prison to the Court of Bankruptcy, between two policemen," this friend "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. . . . It was in this spirit, and with this mode of love, that the saints knelt down to wash the feet of the poor, or stooped to kiss the leper on the cheek. . . . I store his action in the treasure-house of my heart. . . . It is embalmed and kept sweet by the myrrh and cassia of many tears. When wisdom has been profitless to me, philosophy barren, and the proverbs and phrases of those who have sought to give me consolation as dust and ashes in my mouth, the memory of that little, lovely, silent act of love has unsealed for me all the wells of pity, made the desert blossom like a rose, and brought me out of the bitterness of lonely exile into harmony with the wounded, broken, and great heart of the world."

I do not say that there was nothing of God, nothing of the divine humanity, in those who, in indignation which they felt to be righteous, got that poor perverse voluptuary convicted and made of him a public example. It is better that men, themselves

BROTHERHOOD.

not guiltless, should be angry, and even vindictive, against other men's vices, than that they should be utterly indifferent to the corruption of morals. But I venture to affirm that, in the heart and the conduct of the friend who was not alienated by his friend's moral malady and madness, who retained his respect for the brother fallen low, and who could salute the divine humanity in him as reverently as ever, the All-Holy, whose name is Love, was in a higher degree expressed than in the most respectable of those who could see only the sinner and the shame. In the evolution of morals it may be that even the hard and harsh who judge and punish have a place and function; but far mightier and far subtler to invade and cleanse and humble sinful hearts is the forgiving love that never faileth and covers a multitude of sins.

In this connection another striking passage deserves to be quoted, illustrating the marvellous transforming power of kindness.

"For the last seven or eight months, in spite of a succession of great troubles reaching me from the outside world almost without intermission, I have been placed in direct contact with a new spirit working in this prison through man and things, that has helped me beyond any possibility of expression in words: so that while for the first year of my imprisonment I did nothing else, and can remember doing nothing else, but wring my hands in impotent despair and say, 'What an ending, what an appalling ending!' now I try to say to myself, and sometimes do really and sincerely say, 'What a beginning, what a wonderful beginning!' It may really be so. It may become so. If it does I shall owe much to this new personality that has altered every man's life in this place. You may realise it when I say that had I been released last May, as I tried to be, I should have left this place loathing it and every official in it with a bitterness of hatred that would have poisoned my life. I have had a year longer of imprisonment, but humanity has been in the prison along with us all, and now when I go out I shall always remember great kindnesses that I have received from almost everybody, and on the day of

my release I shall give many thanks to many people, and ask to be remembered by them in turn. The prison style is absolutely and entirely wrong. I would give anything to be able to alter it when I go out. I intend to try. But there is nothing in the world so wrong but that the spirit of humanity, which is the spirit of love, the spirit of the Christ who is not in churches, may make it, if not right, at least possible to be borne without too much bitterness of heart."

A GLIMPSE OF CHRIST.

The mightiest of the influences that changed the prisoner's heart was what came to him through reading the Gospels. He managed to get hold of a Greek Testament, and every morning, after he had cleaned his cell and polished his tins, he used to read a little of the Gospels. The English version had become spoiled for him, as for so many others, by being heard read too often and too badly, but returning to the Greek was, he says, "like going into a garden of lilies out of some narrow and dark house."

The vision he got of Jesus Christ was perhaps too much an artist's vision. It certainly would not satisfy the tests of the orthodox theologian. But it was to him convincing, persuasive, and potent.

"Nor in Aeschylus," he writes, "nor Dante, those stern masters of tenderness, in Shakespeare, the most purely human of all the great artists, in the whole Celtic myth and legend, where the loveliness of the world is shown through a mist of tears, and the life of man is no more than the life of a flower, is there anything that, for sheer simplicity of pathos wedded and made one with sublimity of tragic effect, can be said to equal or even approach the last act of Christ's passion. The little supper with his companions, one of whom had already sold him for a price; the anguish in the quiet moon-lit garden; the false friend coming close to him so as to betray him with a kiss; the friend who still believed in him, and on whom, as on a rock, he had hoped to build a house of refuge for Man, denying him as the bird cried to the dawn; his own utter

loneliness, his submission, his acceptance of everything; and, along with it all, such scenes as the high priest of orthodoxy rending his raiment in wrath, and the magistrate of civil justice calling for water in the vain hope of cleansing himself of that stain of innocent blood that makes him the scarlet figure of history; the coronation ceremony of sorrow, one of the most wonderful things in the whole of recorded time; the crucifixion of the Innocent One before the eyes of his mother and of the disciple whom he loved; the soldiers gambling and throwing dice for his clothes; the terrible death by which he gave the world its most eternal symbol; and his final burial in the tomb of the rich man, his body swathed in Egyptian linen with costly spices and perfumes as though he had been a king's son.

"Yet the whole life of Christ—so entirely may sorrow and beauty be made one in their meaning and manifestation—is really an idyll, though it ends with the veil of the temple being rent, and the darkness coming over the face of the earth, and the stone rolled to the door of the sepulchre. One always thinks of him as a young bridegroom with his companions, as indeed he somewhere describes himself; as a shepherd straying through a valley with his sheep in search of green meadow or cool stream; as a singer trying to build out of the music the walls of the City of God; or as a lover for whose love the whole world was too small. His miracles seem to me to be as exquisite as the coming of spring, and quite as natural. I see no difficulty at all in believing that such was the charm of his personality that his mere presence could bring peace to souls in anguish, and that those who touched his garments or his hands forgot their pain; or that as he passed by on the highway of life people who had seen nothing of life's mystery saw it clearly, and others who had been deaf to every voice but that of pleasure heard for the first time the voice of love and found it as 'musical as Apollo's lute'; or that evil passions fled at his approach, and men whose dull, unimaginative lives had been but a mode of death rose as it were from the grave when

he called them; or that when he taught on the hillside the multitude forgot their hunger and thirst and the cares of this world, and that to his friends who listened to him as he sat at meat the coarse food seemed delicate, and the water had the taste of good wine, and the whole house became full of the odour and sweetness of nard."

Here are some words full of a deep insight:

"Pity Christ has, of course, for the poor, for those who are shut up in prisons, for the lowly, for the wretched; but he has far more pity for the rich, for the hard hedonists, for those who waste their freedom in becoming slaves to things, for those who wear soft raiment and live in king's houses. Riches and pleasure seemed to him to be really greater tragedies than poverty or sorrow. . . . In his entreaty to the young man, 'Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor,' it is not of the state of the poor he is thinking, but of the soul of the young man, the soul that wealth was marring. . . . He treated worldly success as a thing absolutely to be despised. He saw nothing in it at all. He looked on wealth as an encumbrance to a man."

SAVED FROM BITTERNESS.

There is no subject about which a greater change is wrought in the mind through the soul's growth and the enlightening and ripening discipline of sorrow, than is frequently wrought concerning the mystery of pain. Oscar Wilde tells us that on one occasion, talking to a lady who did much to help him, he said "that there was enough suffering in one narrow London lane to show that God did not love man, and that wherever there was any sorrow, though but that of a child in some little garden weeping over a fault that it had or had not committed, the whole face of creation was completely marred." He found out that therein he was entirely wrong. The lady told him so at the time he uttered the sentiment, but he could not believe her. "I was not in the sphere," he says, "in which such belief was to be attained to. 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. I cannot conceive of any other explanation. I am convinced that there is no other, and that if the world has 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. . . . When I say that I am convinced of these things I speak with too much pride. Far off, like a perfect pearl, one can see the City of God. It is so wonderful that it seems as if a child could reach it in a summer's day. And so a child could. But with me and such as me it is different. One can realise a thing in a single moment, but one loses it in the long hours that follow with leaden feet. It is so difficult to keep 'heights that the soul is competent to gain.'"

Whatever there may have remained of confusion of thought in Oscar Wilde's mind, whatever of sentiment that may seem doubtful and dangerous to some, if the moral attitude expressed in this book was genuinely his (and there is no ground for suspecting it to have been a mere artistic pose), he experienced during his long, weary imprisonment a very great and precious beginning of salvation. "The first thing I have got to do," he writes in view of his nearing release, "is to free myself from any possible bitterness of feeling against the world. I am completely penniless and absolutely homeless. Yet there are worse things in the world than that. I am quite candid when I say that rather than go out from this prison with bitterness in my heart against the world, I would gladly and readily beg my bread from door to door. I would not a bit mind sleeping in the cool grass in summer, and, when winter came on, sheltering myself by the warm, close-thatched rick, or under the penthouse of a great barn, provided I had love in my heart. . . . Were there not a single house open to me in pity, had I to accept the wallet and ragged cloak of sheer penury, as long as I am free from all resentment, hardness and scorn, I should be able to face the

BROTHERHOOD.

life with much more calm and confidence than I should were my body in purple and fine linen, and the soul within me sick with hate."

The sinner who, having been made to drink a cup of bitterness, is free from resentment, and desires only to be filled with pure love, has begun already—whatever there may still lie before him of stumbling and failure and suffering—to taste the cup of blessedness.



Notice.

This number is the first of the series of quarterly issues of "Brotherhood." The next number will be published on October 14th, and following numbers on the 15th (or when the 15th falls on a Sunday, the 14th) of October, January, and April. The reason for publishing in the middle of a month rather than at the beginning or the end is that printers usually have less to do in the first half of each month than in the second.

The price of each number is still 3d.; by post, 3½d.

Booksellers and newsvendors will still be able as heretofore to get copies from the publishers and from wholesale agents; but, as the demand is not likely to be large in any particular place, few of them, we suppose, will take the trouble to have "Brotherhood" regularly in stock. Readers who wish to have a copy of each issue as soon as it is published will probably find it most satisfactory to send an annual subscription of 1s. 2d., direct to the publishers, and thus get their copy through the post.

Communications intended for the Editor should be sent to
J. BRUCE WALLACE,
Mansfield House University Settlement,
Canning Town, London, E.

Business communications should be addressed to the Publisher,
F. R. HENDERSON,
26, Paternoster Square, London, E.C.

16 August 1905

Manchester Courier.

"ART FOR ART'S SAKE."

BY THE REV. CANON GORTON.

We have in a book which has been declared a miracle of beauty, or the noblest confession of a soul since S. Augustine, an awful object-lesson of the peril of "art for art's sake." I refer to "De Profundis," by Oscar Wilde. I remember him at Oxford, and his name to me then was repellent. He was a fine scholar, with great poetic and artistic gift. He has described himself as a "lord of language." The unhealthiness of the Aesthetic School was made apparent in the wise pages of "Punch"—with its adoration of the blue china, its attitudinizing, its worship of sun-flowers. On leaving Oxford Wilde attained at once a first rank among the literary men of his day. He plunged into all regions of self-indulgence. Then his name became unspeakable. He was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in Reading gaol as a gross criminal. For his artistic garb he wears sackcloth. "Everything about my tragedy has been hideous, mean, repellent, lacking in style. Our very dress makes us grotesque; we are the zanyes of sorrow." His name is on his cell, his hair is cropped, for bed a plank, for occupation picking oakum, and daily on his knees he cleans his cell. What has such an one to say for himself? What is the cause of his disaster? When "De profundis," "out of the depths," he cries, what truth is there in those bitter tears, what hope of newness of life?

THE APOLOGIA.

Let him speak for himself. Let us not listen to condemn, but that we may show compassion to a darkened soul, and learn a lesson written in blood:

"Outside the day may be blue and gold, but the light which creeps through the thickly-muffled glass of the small iron-barred window, beneath which one sits is grey and niggard. It is always twilight in one's cell, as it is always twilight in one's heart."

Only disaster reaches him in prison—first his mother's death. "She had bequeathed me a name noble and honoured. I had disgraced it eternally—made it a low bye-word, dragged it to the mire." He tastes of sorrow, and he finds that where there is sorrow there is holy ground.

"I must say to myself that I ruined myself, and that nobody great or small can be ruined except by his own hand. Terrible as was what the world did for me, what I did for 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 became a spendthrift of my genius. I deliberately

two

16 August 1905

Manchester Courier.

"ART FOR ART'S SAKE."

BY THE REV. CANON GORTON.

We have in a book which has been declared a miracle of beauty, or the noblest confession of a soul since S. Augustine, an awful object-lesson of the peril of "art for art's sake." I refer to "De Profundis," by Oscar Wilde. I remember him at Oxford, and his name to me then was repellent. He was a fine scholar, with great poetic and artistic gift. He has described himself as a "lord of language." The unhealthiness of the Æsthetic School was made apparent in the wise pages of "Punch"—with its adoration of the blue china, its attitudinizing, its worship of sun-flowers. On leaving Oxford Wilde attained at once a first rank among the literary men of his day. He plunged into all regions of self-indulgence. Then his name became unspeakable. He was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in Reading gaol as a gross criminal. For his artistic garb he wears sackcloth. "Everything about my tragedy has been hideous, mean, repellent, lacking in style. Our very dress makes us grotesque; we are the zanies of sorrow." His name is on his cell, his hair is cropped, for bed a plank, for occupation picking oakum, and daily on his knees he cleans his cell. What has such an one to say for himself? What is the cause of his disaster? When "De profundis," "out of the depths," he cries, what truth is there in those bitter tears, what hope of newness of life?

THE APOLOGIA.

Let him speak for himself. Let us not listen to condemn, but that we may show compassion to a darkened soul, and learn a lesson written in blood:

"Outside the day may be blue and gold, but the light which creeps through the thickly-muffled glass of the small iron-barred window beneath which one sits is grey and niggard. It is always twilight in one's cell, as it is always twilight in one's heart."

Only disaster reaches him in prison—first his mother's death. "She had bequeathed me a name noble and honoured. I had disgraced it eternally—made it a low bye-word, dragged it to the mire." He tastes of sorrow, and he finds that where there is sorrow there is holy ground.

"I must say to myself that I ruined myself, and that nobody great or small can be ruined except by his own hand. Terrible as was what the world did for me, what I did for myself was far more terrible still. The gods had given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long ²⁶³⁶ⁿ⁰³¹⁸ⁿspells of senseless and ²⁶³⁶ⁿ⁰³¹⁸ⁿunpleasant ease. I became a spendthrift of my genius. I deliberately

two

went into the depths in search of a new sensation. I forgot that any little act makes and un-makes character. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. When walking the narrow bird-haunted walk at Magdalen, I remember telling a friend that it was my desire to eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden of the world, but I meant to eat only of the trees on the sunlit side, and I shunned the other side for its shadow and its gloom. Failure, disgrace, sorrow, despair, suffering, tears—even all these were things of which I was afraid. And as I had determined to know nothing of them, I was forced to taste each of them in turn, to feed on them."

THE ARTIST AND CHRISTIANITY.

To another friend he had urged "that there was enough suffering in one narrow London lane to show that God did not love man," and "that where there was sorrow the whole face of creation was marred." "I was entirely wrong. Now it seems to me that love of some kind is the only explanation of the extraordinary amount of suffering that there is in the world." He would taste of humility, he would taste of sorrow and of suffering, as things which had hitherto been omitted from his experience—it added another colour to his artistic palette. And an experience yet remains. Morality, philosophy, religion have no meaning or controlling force or power with him—but he would "see Jesus." Let us note then how the artist for art's sake may approach the Christ. To him the basis of "His nature was an intense and flame-like imagination." He maintains that "the secret of Jesus" was contained in the conception that "whatsoever happens to oneself happens to another," an inversion, or perversion rather, of the truth, "That no man liveth to himself," or that "whatsoever happens to another happens to oneself." Many beautiful things he wrote of Christ, as many painters paint, or musicians sing, but with no spiritual perception.

"There is something almost incredible in the idea of the Young Galilean peasant imagining that he could bear on his own shoulders the burden of the entire world—all that had been done and suffered, and all that was to be done and suffered—and not merely imagining it, but actually achieving it."

Christ next ranks with the poets. There is nothing in the highest dramas which can approach the last act of Christ's passion. Then he works up a crucifix with all the artistic skill of a Benvenuto Cellini. Again "it is always a source of pleasure and awe to me to remark that the ultimate survival of the Greek drama—lost elsewhere to art—is to be found in the servitor answering the priest at mass." Then "the life of Christ is an idyll. He is the young bridegroom, the shepherd straying through a valley with his sheep, a singer trying to build out of music the City of God, a lover for whose love the whole world is too small, the charm of His personality brought peace to souls." To live for others as a definite self-conscious aim was not his creed. "Forgive your enemies," it is not for the sake of your enemy, but for one's own self—i.e., for the artistic effect that it has on your own nature.

"Out of the carpenter's shop at Nazareth came a personality infinitely greater than any made by myth and legend, and one destined to reveal to the world the mystical meaning of wine and the real beauties of the flowers of the field."

X

|

went into the depths in search of a new sensation. I forgot that any little act makes and un-makes character. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. When walking the narrow bird-haunted walk at Magdalen, I remember telling a friend that it was my desire to eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden of the world, but I meant to eat only of the trees on the sunlit side, and I shunned the other side for its shadow and its gloom. Failure, disgrace, sorrow, despair, suffering, tears—even all these were things of which I was afraid. And as I had determined to know nothing of them, I was forced to taste each of them in turn, to feed on them."

THE ARTIST AND CHRISTIANITY.

To another friend he had urged "that there was enough suffering in one narrow London lane to show that God did not love man," and "that where there was sorrow the whole face of creation was marred." "I was entirely wrong. Now it seems to me that love of some kind is the only explanation of the extraordinary amount of suffering that there is in the world." He would taste of humility, he would taste of sorrow and of suffering, as things which had hitherto been omitted from his experience—it added another colour to his artistic palette. And an experience yet remains. Morality, philosophy, religion have no meaning or controlling force or power with him—but he would "see Jesus." Let us note then how the artist for art's sake may approach the Christ. To him the basis of "His nature was an intense and flame-like imagination." He maintains that "the secret of Jesus" was contained in the conception that "whatsoever happens to oneself happens to another," an inversion, or perversion rather, of the truth, "That no man liveth to himself," or that "whatsoever happens to another happens to oneself." Many beautiful things he wrote of Christ, as many painters paint, or musicians sing, but with no spiritual perception.

"There is something almost incredible in the idea of the Young Galilean peasant imagining that he could bear on his own shoulders the burden of the entire world—all that had been done and suffered, and all that was to be done and suffered—and not merely imagining it, but actually achieving it."

Christ next ranks with the poets. There is nothing in the highest dramas which can approach the last act of Christ's passion. Then he works up a crucifix with all the artistic skill of a Benvenuto Cellini. Again "it is always a source of pleasure and awe to me to remark that the ultimate survival of the Greek drama—lost elsewhere to art—is to be found in the servitor answering the priest at mass." Then "the life of Christ is an idyll. He is the young bridegroom, the shepherd straying through a valley with his sheep, a singer trying to build out of music the City of God, a lover for whose love the whole world is too small, the charm of His personality brought peace to souls." To live for others as a definite self-conscious aim was not his creed. "Forgive your enemies," it is not for the sake of your enemy, but for one's own self—i.e., for the artistic effect that it has on your own nature.

"Out of the carpenter's shop at Nazareth came a personality infinitely greater than any made by myth and legend, and one destined to reveal to the world the mystical meaning of wine and the real beauties of the flowers of the field."

Again, "the Christ is the source of art." He is a requisite for the beautiful. He is in "Romeo and Juliet," in "Winter's Tale," in provincial poetry, in "The Ancient Mariner." "We owe to him the most diverse things and peoples. Lancelot and Guinevere, Tannhauser, Pointed architecture, and the love of children and flowers. Hence Christ becomes the palpitating centre of romance. He has all the colour elements of life, mystery, strangeness, pathos, suggestion, ecstasy, love." This is "why he is so fascinating to artists."

STRANGE CONCEPTION OF REPENTANCE.

"Of late I have been studying with diligence the four prose poems about Christ. At Christmas I managed to get hold of a Greek Testament, and every morning after I had cleaned out my cell and polished my tins, I read a little of the Gospel—a dozen verses taken by chance anywhere. It is a delightful way of opening the day. Everyone, even in a turbulent, ill-disciplined life, should do the same. When one returns to the Greek it is like going into a garden of lilies out of some narrow and dark house. Christ, like all fascinating personalities, had the power of not merely saying beautiful things, but of making other people say beautiful things. Most people live for love and admiration, but it is by love and admiration that we should live. Everyone is worthy of love, except him who thinks that he is. Love is a sacrifice that should be taken kneeling, and 'Domine non sum dignus' should be on the lips and in the hearts of those who receive it. Again, it is charming when he says 'Take no thought of the morrow.' That is full of Greek feeling. Like all poetical natures he loved ignorant people. His chief war was against Philistines in their dull respectability, their tedious orthodoxy, their worship of vulgar success, those who have no side of their nature illumined by imagination."

Again, "When Christ deals with the sinner he is most romantic." Repentance is desirable because it brings a fresh experience. Again, "Christ does not really teach one anything, but by being brought into His presence one becomes something. That at least once in his life each man walks with Christ to Emmaus." It is difficult to analyse his conception of repentance.

Repentance is a kind of grateful pleasurable sense that your sin has been the cause of opening out to you deeper knowledge of character, and thus the prodigal is thankful to remember that, but for going into the far country He would never have known the Father's love. "I need not tell you that to me reformations in morals are as meaningless and vulgar as reformations in theology. To propose to be a better man is a piece of unscientific cant; to have become a deeper man is the privilege of those who suffer." "People point to Reading gaol and say 'That is where the artistic life leads a man.'" If the artistic life means the tasting in turn of good and evil, the entertainment of saints and devils for the sake of extending the circle of one's friends, for the titivating the palate, I should think a gaol of some kind is safest. But especially I point out that the doctrine of art for art's sake destroys both the soul of the worshipper and the idol. We have seen Christ approached by this artistic mind.

Again, "the Christ is the source of art." He is a requisite for the beautiful. He is in "Romeo and Juliet," in "Winter's Tale," in provincial poetry, in "The Ancient Mariner." "We owe to him the most diverse things and peoples. Lancelot and Guineveve, Tannhauser, Pointed architecture, and the love of children and flowers. Hence Christ becomes the palpitating centre of romance. He has all the colour elements of life, mystery, strangeness, pathos, suggestion, ecstasy, love." This is "why he is so fascinating to artists."

STRANGE CONCEPTION OF REPENTANCE.

"Of late I have been studying with diligence the four prose poems about Christ. At Christmas I managed to get hold of a Greek Testament, and every morning after I had cleaned out my cell and polished my tins, I read a little of the Gospel—a dozen verses taken by chance anywhere. It is a delightful way of opening the day. Everyone, even in a turbulent, ill-disciplined life, should do the same. When one returns to the Greek it is like going into a garden of lilies out of some narrow and dark house. Christ, like all fascinating personalities, had the power of not merely saying beautiful things, but of making other people say beautiful things. Most people live for love and admiration, but it is by love and admiration that we should live. Everyone is worthy of love, except him who thinks that he is. Love is a sacrifice that should be taken kneeling, and 'Domine non sum dignus' should be on the lips and in the hearts of those who receive it. Again, it is charming when he says 'Take no thought of the morrow.' That is full of Greek feeling. Like all poetical natures he loved ignorant people. His chief war was against Philistines in their dull respectability, their tedious orthodoxy, their worship of vulgar success, those who have no side of their nature illumined by imagination."

Again, "When Christ deals with the sinner he is most romantic." Repentance is desirable because it brings a fresh experience. Again, "Christ does not really teach one anything, but by being brought into His presence one becomes something. That at least once in his life each man walks with Christ to Emmaus." It is difficult to analyse his conception of repentance.

Repentance is a kind of grateful pleasurable sense that your sin has been the cause of opening out to you deeper knowledge of character, and thus the prodigal is thankful to remember that, but for going into the far country He would never have known the Father's love. "I need not tell you that to me reformations in morals are as meaningless and vulgar as reformations in theology. To propose to be a better man is a piece of unscientific cant; to have become a deeper man is the privilege of those who suffer." "People point to Reading gaol and say 'That is where the artistic life leads a man.'" If the artistic life means the tasting in turn of good and evil, the entertainment of saints and devils for the sake of extending the circle of one's friends, for the titivating the palate, I should think a gaol of some kind is safest. But especially I point out that the doctrine of art for art's sake destroys both the soul of the artist and the world. We have seen Christ approached by this artistic mind.

Blue pencil
marking by
Robert R of S

The words are the more awful because they are often so beautiful; they have the ring of the words of a fallen angel. They are so patronising as to be well-nigh blasphemous. If Christ put aside the enthusiasm of the young man who knelt and called Him "good," we may surely know He would say "Why called you me idyllic, poetic, dramatic, charming, fascinating."

ART RAISED TO IDOLATRY.

Thus to depict Christ for art's sake is to dwell on the folds of His raiment, to paint with correctness the thorns in the brow, or the shavings in the workshop, or the light on the Galilean hills, but to miss the soul of Christ. This is art raised to idolatry; it is the Paganism of the later Renaissance; it treats the sorrows of the "Man of Sorrows" as a fit subject in which to display literary or artistic or musical gifts. Its seed is in itself. The winsomeness of the King in His Beauty was not to win admiration but to woo the soul, to break from sin. Christ's appeal is not to the imagination but to the will. If that is not gained nothing is gained. The evil spirit departs for a time to return with seven other more wicked than himself, and the last state is worse than the first. It is the same in sickness. In sickness the body is weakened, appetites lose their hold, the world ceases to charm, "but the devil is well, the devil a saint is he." So with this man who cries "De profundis." He looks back with knowledge, but he looks back with no repentance. He sees not that life is only life when it is lost in another. There is Jesus, but no Cross; there is Jesus, but no newness of life, no holiness. I have sinned, I have played the fool exceedingly; not against Thee only have I sinned. "Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." And, therefore, though with intensest pity we see the man in the cell trembling with pleasure with the thought that on the day he leaves prison both the laburnum and lilacs will be blooming in the garden, and that he will see "the wind stir into restless beauty and swaying the gold of one and make the other toss the pale purple of its plumes"; yet we tremble lest all this experience of sorrow, all this sense of beauty, shall be in vain, all these tears but as added judgment, all these pearls to be again cast before swine. But so it was to be—the old vicious friends waited for him, the world again came, Jesus of Nazareth was heeded no more, and the end was one of unredeemed shame. Art for art's sake leads to worse places than Reading gaol. It sullies the walls of our picture galleries; it leads to the desecration of music. It harms both him who gives and him who receives. "Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of Light." The gift denotes a purpose, that purpose can never centre in pride of self-culture, in æsthetic Pharisaism.

THE MORAL.

The moral is as old as Scripture, and as modern as Browning, who, to the painter's question, "Given art, and what more wish you?" replies:

To become now self-acquainters,
And paint man, man, whatever the issue.
Make new hopes shine through the flesh they
fray,
New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters.
To bring the invisible full into play,
Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?

The words are the more awful because they are often so beautiful; they have the ring of the words of a fallen angel. They are so patronising as to be well-nigh blasphemous. If Christ put aside the enthusiasm of the young man who knelt and called Him "good," we may surely know He would say "Why called you me idyllic, poetic, dramatic, charming, fascinating."

ART RAISED TO IDOLATRY.

Thus to depict Christ for art's sake is to dwell on the folds of His raiment, to paint with correctness the thorns in the brow, or the shavings in the workshop, or the light on the Galilean hills, but to miss the soul of Christ. This is art raised to idolatry; it is the Paganism of the later Renaissance; it treats the sorrows of the "Man of Sorrows" as a fit subject in which to display literary or artistic or musical gifts. Its seed is in itself. The winsomeness of the King in His Beauty was not to win admiration but to woo the soul, to break from sin. Christ's appeal is not to the imagination but to the will. If that is not gained nothing is gained. The evil spirit departs for a time to return with seven other more wicked than himself, and the last state is worse than the first. It is the same in sickness. In sickness the body is weakened, appetites lose their hold, the world ceases to charm, "but the devil is well, the devil a saint is he." So with this man who cries "De profundis." He looks back with knowledge, but he looks back with no repentance. He sees not that life is only life when it is lost in another. There is Jesus, but no Cross; there is Jesus, but no newness of life, no holiness. I have sinned, I have played the fool exceedingly; not against Thee only have I sinned. "Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." And, therefore, though with intensest pity we see the man in the cell trembling with pleasure with the thought that on the day he leaves prison both the laburnum and lilacs will be blooming in the garden, and that he will see "the wind stir into restless beauty and swaying the gold of one and make the other toss the pale purple of its plumes"; yet we tremble lest all this experience of sorrow, all this sense of beauty, shall be in vain, all these tears but as added judgment, all these pearls to be again cast before swine. But so it was to be—the old vicious friends waited for him, the world again came. Jesus of Nazareth was heeded no more, and the end was one of unredeemed shame. Art for art's sake leads to worse places than Reading gaol. It sullies the walls of our picture galleries; it leads to the desecration of music. It harms both him who gives and him who receives. "Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of Light." The gift denotes a purpose, that purpose can never centre in pride of self-culture, in æsthetic Pharisaism.

THE MORAL.

The moral is as old as Scripture, and as modern as Browning, who, to the painter's question, "Given art, and what more wish you?" replies:

To become now self-acquainters,
And paint man, man, whatever the issue.
Make new hopes shine through the flesh they
fray,
New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters.
To bring
Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?

DAILY CHRONICLE

AUGUST 28, 1905.

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.

AUGUST 30, 1905.

"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.

DAILY CHRONICLE

AUGUST 28, 1905.

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 additions were made, this was done without explanation.

* * *

AUGUST 30, 1905.

“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 the title was given) of 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 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. Meyerfeld, 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 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 newspapers 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.")

Bazaar Sep. 8

A somewhat interesting literary question has just been raised. Oscar Wilde's "De Profundis" appeared in Berlin before it was published in London, and this German version contains many passages omitted from the English edition. The point is whether the latter is a complete reproduction of the manuscript, or whether some passages have been cut out, and, if so, for what reason. Probably no one but the publishers will be in a position to reply to this question.

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 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. Meyerfeld, 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 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 newspapers 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.")