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Oscar Wilde
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Vol. **7**

The Truth About Oscar Wilde

By Ernest McGaffey

OSCAR FINGALL O'FLAHERTIE WYLLYS WILDE, Irish born and educated both in Ireland and England, came naturally by the great mental gifts he possessed. His mother was a writer of distinction, and her brilliant son was poet, dramatist, wit, and maker of polished epigrams. As a novelist he did indifferently well. But it is as a poet that he will be remembered, when his prose is forgotten and his dramas have disappeared.

It has been the fashion, since the man's downfall, to exalt the work he has produced since his imprisonment as something for which the world should be very thankful. "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," the most powerful poem written in the past twenty-five years or more, and "De Profundis," his personal autopsy of himself, are instanced as what mankind should be glad to possess.

Nothing could be more erroneous. They are both built from the ruins of a gifted and highly attuned nature; and nothing is more melancholy than the moonlight of fame shining down on a ruined character. Oscar Wilde had given to man beautiful and imperishable poetry before his life became blighted, and that his days, ended in banishment as they were, should be considered a fair price for such work is a monstrous injustice to the man's memory.

To some who arrogate to themselves the right to judge, Wilde's poem "Theocritus" is the most perfect example of word-music in the language. The cloying sweetness of portions of the poetry of John Keats, the liquid numbers of Tennyson's most mellifluous verse are far transcended in any single instance by this matchless lyric. It breathes the very essence of the fields; the voice of the winds is within its lines, and all the haunting melody of regret haloes it with a dying glow. That the man who wrote this poem, were it even his only achievement, should go to the grave with the bar sinister across his brow is a lasting and irremediable pity.

And those who would glorify the author of "Reading Gaol" and "De Profundis" as having after all triumphed over Fate by these high accomplishments in literature must surely forget his own lines in the former,

*"And all the woe that moved him so
That he gave that bitter cry,
And the wild regrets, and the bloody sweats,
None knew so well as I;
For he who lives more lives than one,
More deaths than one must die."*

The ordinary man is prone to sin. The man to be avoided is the man who has no petty vices. To be immoral, to drink, to gamble, and in various ways to transgress the laws of the land and the so-called moral laws has been part of men's programme since the flood. But there are well-defined limits, both by the laws of man and the laws of nature,—
"let the mark of the plague be set upon the door, and then let him that enters it die."

Byron and Burns had no more claims to morality than rabbits, but their immorality was frankly and naturally human. They stand in history and in men's memories as manly men both, with the failings found in men of all classes and kinds. They had no taint in their blood, no subtle curse of degeneracy to contend with, probably. And in this, both were fortunate.

With Oscar Wilde the morbid tendency showed from the first. In his book of poems, published in 1881, appears a poem of a young Greek who falls in love with a marble statue in the temple. He comes back at night and breaks into the temple to lavish his caresses on the passive stone. Typical of the love of beauty, you say? Possibly! But a most unhealthy and forbidding fancy. In "The Picture of Dorian Grey," published in 1888, the festering process goes on.

Now the facts are that Wilde undoubtedly knew of this poison in his brain. "De Profundis" tells of his playing with this insidious fire in his veins until a species of insanity had him in its clutch. Keen and strong as his mind was at first, he knew as well as he knew of the sunlight and the cesspool that there was dreadful danger in his mental state. And that he did not fight this tendency, with all the strength of his being, and that he did not combat any possibility of his own degradation by every means within his power is where the blame rests with him.

Let it be admittedly said that grievously as he transgressed most grievously has he answered for it. No man more fully; no man more honestly, no man more terribly. His mother died in a year from his disgrace; he lost wife, children, position, eminence, fame, fortune, the praise of friends and the envy of enemies, pride, self-respect, liberty.

*"Since he, mis-called the morning star,
Nor man nor fiend hath fallen so far."*

It is a mistake to imagine that "De Profundis" is his greatest expression of contrition. "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," written when the burden was heaviest on his heart, is Wilde's true "De Profundis." Out of the depths of despair; out of the fullness of the heart. That in both of these remarkable books he was governed even in the throes of anguish by a sense of the beautiful in language is entirely in

accord with the man's genius. He could only think in music.

But the unwritten *de profundis* of the spirit, the ever-present shadow of shame, the sorrow of true friends, the grief of loved ones, the corrosion of a poignant regret—there lay this man's heartache. And that he himself should have dragged down the temple upon his own fame!

After all, there is something in character.

The blame attached to Oscar Wilde by the world had much of deepest pity and regret in it. But the decree was inexorable. And the decree was just.

The lesson to be gained is that when men have evil tendencies, they are the ones to resist such tendencies. And whether morbid or degenerate fancies knock at the portals of a man's mind he should fight them as he would the attempted destroyer of his life. Let him mingle with humanity; swing into the current of life; get out into the fields; sail the deep seas; walk on the highways, and in the slums; abjure self-analysis and morbid introspection, and hold fast to the best and highest that is in him.

*"I hold it truth, with him who sings,
To one clear harp in divers tones
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."*

As for Oscar Wilde, God rest his soul in peace. He sinned, suffered, repented, and atoned.

Is Oscar Wilde Alive?

BY GEORGE SYLVESTER VIERECK.

There is a rumor afloat so sensational that I hardly dare to express it, namely, that the author of "De Profundis" is not dead at all, but that he either lives the life of a recluse in the bosom of the all-embracing Church, or, according to another version, that he is at this very moment in the City of New York. I cannot vouch for the truth of this report: I can only relate exactly how I came to hear of it and what reason there may be to believe that it is more than "the stuff that dreams are made of." I am aware that what I shall say has the thrill of the melodrama, and for that reason will be doubted by many who do not know the truth of the old platitude that truth is stranger than fiction and that, though it may imitate art, it often surpasses the latter.

It was during the intermission at one of our fashionable theaters. The conversation for some reason or other had turned on Wilde. A very charming and clever woman, well known in the circles of the Sunrise Club, spoke to me softly: "And have you not heard . . . they whisper . . . among those who know . . . that Oscar Wilde is not dead at all . . . that the monks in a Spanish cloister have taken him under their shelter . . . that he is dead to the world only . . . but . . ." and she raised her finger to her lips . . . "they whisper . . ." I was speechless. The music seemed to come as from a far distance. . . . The actors danced past my eyes like shadows. . . .

That was three months ago. But recently I received a very forcible reminder of the same rumor (for so we must still call it), which left me simply aghast. I had been asked by a German friend, the translator of "Salome" into that language, to buy for him, if possible, a copy of the "Duchess of Padua," one of Wilde's earlier plays, which I understand, was even performed in New York, but no copy of which seems procurable through the ordinary channels.

So I called at a well-known bookshop, where once before I had seen a number of letters which the unfortunate poet had written to Smithers, his publisher. One passage especially lung to my memory. . . . "You have a very forcible way to remind me of my loss of power and position. . . . But this is a mathematical problem.

These I have never been able to solve. When it was a romantic problem I succeeded—only too well. . . ." Recalling these letters it seemed reasonable that here I might be able to obtain the information desired. In ordering some books and inquiring for the one I mentioned, I had occasion to speak a little while to one of the clerks, whom I know to be a sincere and intelligent man. I cannot tell how it came about, but, prompted by a sudden caprice, I said significantly, as it were in italics: " . . . It is said that Wilde has not died at all. . . ." When I had said these words the young man looked

at me curiously. Then he said, as if confident that I was one of the partakers of a great secret: "I know, for I saw him only two weeks ago." "Is it possible? But where?" "Right here in New York." "On the street?" "No, not on the street." "Did you try to speak to him?" "I did, for ten minutes. And I have hardly ever heard a talker more brilliant, or one more sparkling with wit." "Are you sure that it was he?" "It could have been no other, but I asked no questions. . . ." My curiosity seemed to arouse his suspicions. "You want to establish the facts in the case, I see." And from that moment it was impossible to draw another word from him. In fact, he seemed to regret having forgotten himself so far.

For all that I have said hitherto I could account in any court. What follows is not conclusive evidence, but is based on conjecture. Readers of "De Profundis" will remember that Mr. Wilde said in that remarkable revelation—less remarkable, perhaps only, than the "Ballad of Reading Gaol"—that after his release from prison it was his intention to write such work as would justify him and the artistic temperament.

It was clear that the world would never forgive the living, but might it not forgive the dead? And if now, crowned with a world's admiration, he should come back, would it not pardon the re-arisen poet who had died at least one death for his sin? If he came back at this moment there would be a flutter and a stir, there would be indignation at the ruse, but nevertheless he would be on a much stronger footing than in those well-remembered days when, an outcast and an exile, he left England forever. For meanwhile "Lady Windemere's Fan" has been staged both here and in England, "De Profundis" has made a deep and lasting impression,

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This leads me to another point of interest. Any one who has had the opportunity to watch the Wilde movement on the continent, especially in Germany, where it is at present, without exaggeration, the leading movement of the day, could have noticed that this boom, to call it so, began and increased in such a way that it is easily conceivable that a mind, a master's will, was behind it all. Translations were published of "Dorian Gray." "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" and some of the essays. Sherard's book, "The Story of an Unhappy Friendship," which, to be sure, deals more with Mr. Sherard than with Mr. Wilde, appeared in German. "Salome," that gruesome and subtle bit of tragedy, passed over a hundred different German stages. "An Ideal Husband," "Lady Windemere's Fan," "The Importance of Being Earnest," and others, followed. Yet access to such works as the author himself had not cared to recognize in riper years, as "The Duchess of Padua," was jealously guarded. And finally "De Profundis" was published in the *Neue Rundschau* of Berlin, before it appeared in this country.

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USA
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English prose, is written, not as one would expect, by Mr. Gosse or Mr. Arthur Symons, but by a Mr. Wright, of Olney, who was apparently intended by Nature for the biographer of some company promoter or pushing "captain of industry." Pater may not have been the saint his friends are so anxious to make him out to be, but even Dante would not have punished him in so barbarous a fashion. Again, what had that dapper little prig, Canon Ainger, in common with the exquisite humourist and Freethinker, Charles Lamb? What he ought to have written was the life of another prig, say that of Jowett, who was not only a prig himself, but the fruitful cause of priggishness in others. That would have been a sort of poetic justice. But it may be that Nature is an ironist, and loves a paradox even better than does our friend Mr. Chesterton.

In the case of Oscar Wilde, all the moral depravity in the world would not justify the philistine denigration of his biographer in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. With a few honourable exceptions, notably an article by Mr. Ernest Newman in the *Free Review* (1895), and Mr. Ransome's little book, Wilde has suffered more than any other writer from vulgar and incompetent scribblers. He is just beginning to get the criticism he deserves. Still, it must be pointed out that he himself was partly to blame for the niggardly appreciation of his critics. He always found pleasure in saying—paradoxically, perhaps—that he had put his genius into his life, and into his books merely his talent. He said this so frequently, and it was echoed so faithfully by men of letters and journalists, that it came to be accepted as the truth by even the most intelligent of his critics. It was therefore possible for M. Andre Gide, in 1901, to insist upon reminding his French readers that Wilde was not a writer of any value. By 1910 the French critic's opinion had been profoundly modified, and he deplored the unjust severity of his earlier opinion. We are at last coming to see that Wilde stood in closer relation to the artistic ideals and inspirations of his time than any other writer; that he is a more representative man of letters than Pater, largely because of his richer vitality; that his prose style is perfection; that he handles the English language in his *Intentions* and *De Profundis* with a natural grace and a command of subtle rhythms that make even some of the finest styles appear lumbering and monotonous.

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A Note on Wilde's "De Profundis."

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THE amazing importance Wilde gives to sorrow as a factor in life and art is only the outcome of his personal experience unchecked by reason. Had he not been the victim of enraged British virtue, we should have heard little about the wonderful virtue of sorrow. His work is in itself a plain refutation of his assertions. It is fairly arguable that the best side of it is in its blitheness, its expansiveness. But let us see how far he can go in the way of paradox. "Prosperity, pleasure, and success," he tells us,

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(Continued from p. 573.)

VII.

The Rise and Progress of Mental Power.

We are asked to remind those of our friends who attend the outdoor lectures that in consequence of the earlier closing of the parks each Sunday, the time of all Evening Lectures has been changed. The exact hour will be found by reference to our Lecture List.

shapeliness which come as a pleasant surprise to those of us who have had the misfortune to be obliged to wade through the verse of our much-belauded soldier-poets.

It must have been noticed by anyone who has given attention to the attitude of the critics to Wilde's work that many of his detractors were quite certain that they could detect the note of insincerity in *De Profundis*. But the charge of insincerity is as easy to make as it is difficult to make out. Some objected to the style as out of keeping with the subject. Others were annoyed by the paradox; the incoherence in the thought. They could not see that if Wilde had thought and written in any other way—that if his style, for instance, had been as plain and as unlovely as that of some of his critics—the charge of insincerity would have had a solid foundation. It was not the sort of book the critics would have written, therefore it was insincere. Imperfect sympathies have never been too scrupulous. The critics more or less unconsciously found insincerity where there was only inconsistency.

De Profundis, whatever else it may not be, is patently sincere. It was written, Mr. Ross tells us, during the last moments of Wilde's imprisonment. It was his last work in prose. The manuscript passed into the hands of Mr. Ross, but it was not printed in its entirety. The omitted portions, or a part of them, were made public through an incredibly foolish libel action. For the student of Wilde's work, there is as much of him in *De*

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English prose, is written, not as one would expect, by Mr. Gosse or Mr. Arthur Symons, but by a Mr. Wright, of Olney, who was apparently intended by Nature for the biographer of some company promoter or pushing "captain of industry." Pater may not have been the saint his friends are so anxious to make him out to be, but even Dante would not have punished him in so barbarous a fashion. Again, what had that dapper little prig, Canon Ainger, in common with the exquisite humourist and Freethinker, Charles Lamb? What he ought to have written was the life of another prig, say that of Jowett, who was not only a prig himself, but the fruitful cause of priggishness in others. That would have been a sort of poetic justice. But it may be that Nature is an ironist, and loves a paradox even better than does our friend Mr. Chesterton.

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GEO. UNDERWOOD.

Biddy's First Communion.

On the first Sunday of last May, little Biddy Murphy made her first communion. It was a beautiful morning, and as I was going for a stroll in the warm sunshine, I met Biddy and her mother coming home. I had never seen the child in anything else but rags and hand-me-downs, and here she was, all in spotless white, a very blushing bride. I gave her a sixpence, and told her how beautiful she looked, and to be sure to let my children see her pretty dress.

Biddy is not convincing as a bride. Her rosy cheeks, straight black hair, and roguish eyes seem to ask for scarlet and yellow, beads, sequins, bracelets, and a general appearance of the world and the flesh, of gratification and indulgence instead of self-sacrifice, renunciation, of God and the cloister. Now, had it been Margaret, that would have filled the picture, for she has golden tresses, cerulean blue eyes, a delicate skin, and an ethereal expression—surely that's the correct combination for something angelic. If I were a scoundrel, I would paint a picture of Margaret in her nightgown, kneeling at a bedside in a room in which was prominently

There is one thing I have never ceased to marvel at during my sojourn in Dublin slums, and that is the simply wonderful way mothers dress and turn out their children from homes that are a disgrace to civilization. What a brave face these women put on their poverty, and how grossly they are labelled for the acts of the few for whom the conditions are overpowering!

On that beautiful Sunday in May, I saw scores of little children, of the class of Biddy, walking out with their proud grown up relatives, and I did not see a mother who was even tolerably well clad. And yet they were done up in their best. Although the day was oppressively hot, the long coat concealing any amount of raggedness was much in evidence. Hats of a few seasons ago had been faked up to make them presentable. Travesties of creations in all conscience, but now quite bizarre when rejuvenated with bits of obviously new and incongruously coloured trimmings. The feet were frowsy. Low shoes are not for the poor, as poverty uncovers a multitude of shins. Altogether, the mothers were a grotesque collection, and one who did not understand might be moved to merriment. But I have known too much to make a jest of tragedy. To my aesthetic perception, even the best dressed of the children was but in better or cleaner shoddy than the others, and the difference between the way the women were clad and how they might have been with a pound or two more would be trifling. But, when we think that each of those poor Dublin mothers might have been "dressed like a lady" had she not scraped up everything to deck her child out for her first communion, we can then appreciate the mother-love of these women. Priests may assure us that it is the solemnity of the occasion that calls forth the self-sacrifice, but observation proves that

may be rough of grain and common in fibre, but sorrow is the most sensitive of all created things. There is nothing that stirs in the whole world of thought to which sorrow does not vibrate in terrible and exquisite pulsation. The thin beaten-out leaf of tremulous gold that chronicles the direction of forces the eye cannot see is in comparison coarse. It is a wound that bleeds when any hand but that of love touches it, and even then must bleed again, though not in pain. When there is sorrow there is holy ground.....Sorrow and all that it teaches is my new world.....I now see that sorrow, being the supreme emotion of which man is capable, is at once the type and test of all great art.....There are times when sorrow seems to me to be the only truth.

He points to passages in his books whereby this so-called truth is prepared or foreshadowed. It is incarnate, he tells us in the prose-poem of the man who, from the bronze of the image of *Pleasure that liveth for a moment*, has to make the image of the *Sorrow that abideth for ever*. "It could not be otherwise," he goes on; "At every single moment one is what one is going to be no less than what one has been." M. Andre Gide, however, has pointed out this prose-poem (*The Artist*) embodies a truth diametrically opposed to that of the *De Profundis*. It was out of the bronze of the image of *sorrow that endureth for ever* that the artist fashioned an image of *Pleasure that abideth for a moment*. How pathetically eloquent is this curious lapse of memory of a mind overwrought by sorrow! Wilde's insistence on the spiritual value of humility is, I think, only another indication of a slackening of nervous tissues, of failure from sheer weariness. We see nothing of the old Wilde, in spite of his claim to individualism, in this passage:—

I find hidden somewhere away in my nature something that tells me that nothing in the whole world is meaningless, and suffering least of all. That something hidden away in my nature, like a treasure in a field, is Humility. It is the last thing left to me, and the best; the ultimate discovery at which I have arrived, the starting point for a fresh development.....It is the one thing that has in it the elements of life, of a new life, a *Vita Nuova* for me. Of all things it is the strangest. One cannot acquire it, except by surrendering everything one has. It is only when one has lost all things, that one knows that one possesses it.....My nature is seeking a fresh mode of self-realization.....I hope to be able to recreate my creative faculty.

The creative faculty of Wilde was to be recreated once more, and once only in the moving *Ballad of Reading Gaol*. The dominant notes of this great poem is not a Christian and servile humility, the negation of sane individualism, but, rather, a fierce demand for "common justice and brotherhood." What is more, the careful reader will find even in the pages of *De Profundis* itself many proofs that the old natural spirit of pride was not extinct. How little humility is there

in this indictment of people who hounded him to death:—

Many men on their release carry their prison about with them into the air, and hide it as a secret disgrace in their hearts, and at length, like poor poisoned things, creep into some hole and die. It is wretched that they should have to do so, and it is wrong, terribly wrong, of society that it should force them to do so. Society takes upon itself the right to inflict appalling punishment on the individual, but it also has the supreme vice of shallowness, and fails to realize what it has done. When the man's punishment is over, it leaves him to himself; that is to say, it abandons him at the very moment when its highest duty towards him begins. It is really ashamed of its own actions, and shuns those whom it has punished, as people shun a creditor whose debt they cannot pay, or one on whom they have inflicted an irreparable, an irremediable wrong. I can claim on my side that if I realize what I have suffered, society should realize what it has inflicted on me.

There is no perverse Christian doctrine of self-sacrifice or humility here, for Wilde was, what so many members of the Roman Catholic faith are, a natural Pagan, for whom religion had no meaning. "The faith that others give to what is unseen," he tells us,

I give to what one can touch, and look at. The gods dwell in temples made with hands; and within the circle of actual experience is my creed made perfect and complete. . . . When I think about religion at all, I feel as if I would like to found an order for those who *cannot* believe; the Confraternity of the Faithless, one might call it, where on an altar, on which no tapir burned, a priest, in whose heart peace had no dwelling, might celebrate with unblessed bread and a chalice empty of wine. Agnosticism should have its ritual no less than faith. It has sown its martyrs, it should reap its saints, and praise God daily for having hidden Himself from man. But whether it be faith or agnosticism, it must be nothing external to me. Its symbols must be of my own creating. Only that is spiritual which makes its own form.

The idea Wilde has of the real or mythical founder of Christianity, the Jesus of the Gospels, is as fanciful as that of Renan, whose *Life of Jesus* he wittily describes as "that gracious fifth gospel, the Gospel according to St. Thomas." For Wilde, as for Renan, Jesus was a divine dreamer, a poet of whose company are Sophocles and our own Shelley. To hold up their Lord as the supreme type of the artist must seem something very like blasphemy to all good Puritans if they happen to overcome their natural distrust of art and glance at Wilde's writings. They see in Jesus only the hard moralist, the forerunner of Jonathan Edwards, just as for our friends the Christian Socialists he is a sentimental Communist, the prototype (shall I say?) of Mr. Phillip Snowden. For Wilde, as also for many of us who avoid Socialism as we would the plague, he is an Individualist, like every artist who has imposed his vision of things upon the world. Not only was he an artist—he was also a Jew. And the Jew, with his vivid consciousness of racial difference, of the peculiar value of his contribution to the world's thought and work, with his intense pride of possession, intellectual and material, does not seem to be cut out by Nature for a Communist. If he has at times become the prophet of socialistic millenniums, it has been invariably in the interest of some revolutionary cause. I can hardly imagine a company of Jews, even the least sophisticated of the race, as quietly agreeing for one day to share all things in common; but I can imagine the more sophisticated ones using their persuasive eloquence to turn their enemies into Socialists. However that may be, Jesus was bracketed with Heine as a good Communist. But as, for Wilde, Communism was merely a prepara-

tion for a sort of artistic anarchism, and not an end in itself, there is not much gained, from the point of view of Socialism, by claiming Jesus and Heine as Communists.

Wilde was a Catholic, and for that reason more than half a Pagan. Catholicism, we are told by Remy de Gourmont, "is Christianity paganzed." "A religion," he goes on to say, "at once mystic and sensual, it can satisfy and has satisfied for ages, the two primordial and contradictory tendencies of human nature, which are to live both in the finite and the infinite, or to put it in more acceptable terms, both in sensation and intelligence." De-paganized Christianity, or Puritanism, with its virulent hatred of every expression of the joy of life, every artistic impulse, Wilde distrusted as essentially unsocial. Instead of the Pagan miracle, the work of art—the only miracle upon which Wilde and we Free-thinkers set any value—the Gospels give us the unnecessary miracles of raising a man from the dead, the bacchic conjuring of water into wine, the stupid bedevilment of an innocent drove of pigs, and suchlike pieces of trivial irrealism. The Christian miracle is a reality for those only who have never got beyond childhood; the Pagan miracle, a play by Sophocles, an ode by Catullus, take on a new meaning, a new beauty, as we ourselves grow in wisdom. The teaching generally of the Gospels exasperated and tormented the humanist in Wilde, and his most mordantly ironic parables were written to discredit in every sense the idealism of Christianity by setting it over against the naturalism of Pagan thought. This attitude is brought out clearly in one of the prose-poems, "The Doer of Good," which has not a little of the subtlety of symbolism we admire in Nietzsche and Baudelaire.

It was night-time and He was alone.

And He saw afar-off the walls of a round city and went towards the city.

And when He came near he heard within the city the tread of the feet of joy, and the laughter of the mouth of gladness and the loud noise of many lutes. And He knocked at the gate and certain of the gate-keepers opened to him.

And He beheld a house that was of marble and had fair pillars of marble before it. The pillars were hung with garlands, and within and without there were torches of cedar. And he entered the house.

And when He had passed through the hall of chalcidony and the long hall of feasting, He saw lying on a couch of sea-purple one whose hair was crowned with red roses and whose lips were red with wine.

And He went behind him and touched him on the shoulder and said to him, "Why do you live like this?"

And the young man turned round and recognized Him and made answer and said, "But I was a leper once, and you healed me. How else should I live?"

And He passed out of the house and went again into the street.

And after a while He saw one whose face and raiment were painted and whose feet were shod with pearls.

And behind her came, slowly as a hunter, a young man who wore a cloak of two colours. Now the face of the woman was as the fair face of an idol, and the eyes of the young man were bright with lust.

And He followed swiftly and touched the hand of the young man and said to him, "Why do you look at this woman, and in such wise?"

And the young man turned round and recognized Him and said, "But I was blind once, and you gave me sight. At what else should I look?"

And He ran forward and touched the painted raiment of the woman and said to her, "Is there no other way in which to walk save the way of sin?"

And the woman turned round and recognized Him, and laughed and said, "But you forgave me my sins, and the way is a pleasant way."

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I would paint a picture of Margaret in her nightgown kneeling at a bedside in a room in which was prominently

There is one thing I have never ceased to marvel at during my sojourn in Dublin slums, and that is the simply wonderful way mothers dress and turn out their children from homes that are a disgrace to civilization. What a brave face these women put on their poverty, and how grossly they are labelled for the acts of the few for whom the conditions are overpowering!

On that beautiful Sunday in May, I saw scores of little children, of the class of Biddy, walking out with their proud grown up relatives, and I did not see a mother who was even tolerably well clad. And yet they were done up in their best. Although the day was oppressively hot, the long coat concealing any amount of raggedness was much in evidence. Hats of a few seasons ago had been faked up to make them presentable. Travesties of creations in all conscience, but now quite bizarre when rejuvenated with bits of obviously new and incongruously coloured trimmings. The feet were frowsy. Low shoes are not for the poor, as poverty uncovers a multitude of shins. Altogether, the mothers were a grotesque collection, and one who did not understand might be moved to merriment. But I have known too much to make a jest of tragedy. To my æsthetic perception, even the best dressed of the children was but in better or cleaner shoddy than the others, and the difference between the way the women were clad and how they might have been with a pound or two more would be trifling. But, when we think that each of those poor Dublin mothers might have been "dressed like a lady" had she not scraped up everything to deck her child out for her first communion, we can then appreciate the mother-love of these women. Priests may assure us that it is the solemnity of the occasion that calls forth the self-sacrifice, but observation proves that

in this indictment of people who hounded him to death:—

Many men on their release carry their prison about with them into the air, and hide it as a secret disgrace in their hearts, and at length, like poor poisoned things, creep into some hole and die. It is wretched that they should have to do so, and it is wrong, terribly wrong, of society that it should force them to do so. Society takes upon itself the right to inflict appalling punishment on the individual, but it also has the supreme vice of shallowness, and fails to realize what it has done. When the man's punishment is over, it leaves him to himself; that is to say, it abandons him at the very moment when its highest duty towards him begins. It is really ashamed of its own actions, and shuns those whom it has punished, as people shun a creditor whose debt they cannot pay, or one on whom they have inflicted an irreparable, an irremediable wrong. I can claim on my side that if I realize what I have suffered, society should realize what it has inflicted on me.

There is no perverse Christian doctrine of self-sacrifice or humility here, for Wilde was, what so many members of the Roman Catholic faith are, a natural Pagan, for whom religion had no meaning. "The faith that others give to what is unseen," he tells us,

I give to what one can touch, and look at. The gods dwelt in temples made with hands; and within the circle of actual experience is my creed made perfect and complete.....When I think about religion at all, I feel as if I would like to find an order for those who *cannot* believe; the Confraternity of the Faithless, one might call it, where on an altar, on which no tapir burned, a priest, in whose heart peace had no dwelling, might celebrate with unblessed bread and a chalice empty of wine. Agnosticism should have its ritual no less than faith. It has sown its martyrs, it should reap its saints, and praise God daily for having hidden Himself from man. But whether it be faith or agnosticism, it must be nothing external to me. Its symbols must be of my own creating. Only that is spiritual which makes its own form.

The idea Wilde has of the real or mythical founder of Christianity, the Jesus of the Gospels, is as fanciful as that of Renan, whose *Life of Jesus* he wittily describes as "that gracious fifth gospel, the Gospel according to St. Thomas." For Wilde, as for Renan, Jesus was a divine dreamer, a poet of whose company are Sophocles and our own Shelley. To hold up their Lord as the supreme type of the artist must seem something very like blasphemy to all good Puritans if they happen to overcome their natural distrust of art and glance at Wilde's writings. They see in Jesus only the hard moralist, the forerunner of Jonathan Edwards, just as for our friends the Christian Socialists he is a sentimental Communist, the prototype (shall I say?) of Mr. Phillip Snowden. For Wilde, as also for many of us who avoid Socialism as we would the plague, he is an Individualist, like every artist who has imposed his vision of things upon the world. Not only was he an artist—he was also a Jew. And the Jew, with his vivid consciousness of racial difference, of the peculiar value of his contribution to the world's thought and work, with his intense pride of possession, intellectual and material, does not seem to be cut out by Nature for a Communist. If he has at times become the prophet of socialistic millenniums, it has been invariably in the interest of some revolutionary cause. I can hardly imagine a company of Jews, even the least sophisticated of the race, as quietly agreeing for one day to share all things in common; but I can imagine the more sophisticated ones using their persuasive eloquence to turn their enemies into Socialists. However that may be, Jesus was bracketed with Heine as a good Communist. But as, for Wilde, Communism was merely a prepara-

tion for a sort of artistic anarchism, and not an end in itself, there is not much gained, from the point of view of Socialism, by claiming Jesus and Heine as Communists.

Wilde was a Catholic, and for that reason more than half a Pagan. Catholicism, we are told by Remy de Gourmont, "is Christianity paganized." "A religion," he goes on to say, "at once mystic and sensual, it can satisfy and has satisfied for ages, the two primordial and contradictory tendencies of human nature, which are to live both in the finite and the infinite, or to put it in more acceptable terms, both in sensation and intelligence." De-paganized Christianity, or Puritanism, with its virulent hatred of every expression of the joy of life, every artistic impulse, Wilde distrusted as essentially unsocial. Instead of the Pagan miracle, the work of art—the only miracle upon which Wilde and we Free-thinkers set any value—the Gospels give us the unnecessary miracles of raising a man from the dead, the bacchic conjuring of water into wine, the stupid bedevilment of an innocent drove of pigs, and suchlike pieces of trivial irrationalism. The Christian miracle is a reality for those only who have never got beyond childhood; the Pagan miracle, a play by Sophocles, an ode by Catullus, take on a new meaning, a new beauty, as we ourselves grow in wisdom. The teaching generally of the Gospels exasperated and tormented the humanist in Wilde, and his most mordantly ironic parables were written to discredit in every sense the idealism of Christianity by setting it over against the naturalism of Pagan thought. This attitude is brought out clearly in one of the prose-poems, "The Doer of Good," which has not a little of the subtlety of symbolism we admire in Nietzsche and Baudelaire.

It was night-time and He was alone.

And He saw afar-off the walls of a round city and went towards the city.

And when He came near he heard within the city the tread of the feet of joy, and the laughter of the mouth of gladness and the loud noise of many lutes. And He knocked at the gate and certain of the gate-keepers opened to him.

And He beheld a house that was of marble and had fair pillars of marble before it. The pillars were hung with garlands, and within and without there were torches of cedar. And he entered the house.

And when He had passed through the hall of chalcidony and the long hall of feasting, He saw lying on a couch of sea-purple one whose hair was crowned with red roses and whose lips were red with wine.

And He went behind him and touched him on the shoulder and said to him, "Why do you live like this?"

And the young man turned round and recognized Him and made answer and said, "But I was a leper once, and you healed me. How else should I live?"

And He passed out of the house and went again into the street.

And after a while He saw one whose face and raiment were painted and whose feet were shod with pearls. And behind her came, slowly as a hunter, a young man who wore a cloak of two colours. Now the face of the woman was as the fair face of an idol, and the eyes of the young man were bright with lust.

And He followed swiftly and touched the hand of the young man and said to him, "Why do you look at this woman, and in such wise?"

And the young man turned round and recognized Him and said, "But I was blind once, and you gave me sight. At what else should I look?"

And He ran forward and touched the painted raiment of the woman and said to her, "Is there no other way in which to walk save the way of sin?"

And the woman turned round and recognized Him, and laughed and said, "But you forgave me my sins, and the way is a pleasant way."

Notes and Discussions

A JESTER WITHOUT GENIUS

De Profundis contains about the third part of a manuscript which Oscar Wilde sent from Reading Gaol to his literary executor, Mr. Robert Ross, on April 1, 1897. It was written in the form of a personal letter. The whole manuscript no doubt is, as Wilde says in sending it to his executor, 'the only document which really gives any explanation of my extraordinary behaviour'; but, as it stands, even in the German version, it is far from giving any such explanation. It contains, there is reason to believe, the best part of what is purely literary in it, but its literary interest can hardly, in the nature of the case, be of so much significance to us as its psychological interest. Has even enough been published to show fully what the writer calls 'my mental development while in prison, and the inevitable evolution of my character and intellectual attitude towards life that has taken place'? It is doubtful. 'Some day,' he says in the letter from which I have quoted, 'the truth will have to be known, not necessarily in my lifetime; but I am not prepared to sit in the grotesque pillory they put me into, for all time.' 'I don't defend my conduct. I explain it,' he says, further. How much of the explanation is lost to us, with those two-thirds of the manuscript which we are not permitted to see?

What we see, what constitutes the greatest value of the book as it is, is as sincere as possible an attempt to write down the actual effect of prison solitude on one who had rarely been alone, and never without freedom in life. To me the most touching, because the most real, thing in it, is a little passage, brought in merely as an illustration of an argument, in which he tells us how, when he was 'allowed by the doctor to have white bread to eat instead of the coarse black or brown bread of ordinary prison fare,' it seemed to him so great a delicacy that, he says, 'at the close of each meal I carefully eat whatever crumbs may be left on my tin plate, or have fallen on the rough towel that one uses as a cloth so as not to soil one's table; and I do so not from hunger—I get now quite sufficient food—but simply in order that nothing should be wasted of what is given me.' There is not much that is so simple, or so charming, or so direct as that; but there is a very earnest attempt to reckon with the great sorrowful facts of life, as they had come, one after another, upon him; to make, as the basis of that accepted sorrow, a new house of life, a new palace of art. There is a study of the life and teaching of Christ, which, among many paradoxes, has many truths; and there are resolutions for a future which never came, whose sincerity is not to be questioned by their failure.

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Throughout, we see him face to face with the reality of things; we see him tested by that reality, we see him conscious that he is being tested, and we see (as he himself does not see) that he is unchanged, that he is incapable of change.

In this book we see reality come close to him, reveal its lineaments, which he has never yet seen through the veils which he has woven for its adornment: he sees it face to face, recognizes, yet never realizes it for what it is. Where another man might have 'seen an instant, and been saved,' he, seeing, is unable to grasp, unable to be saved; that is, taken out of himself. His nature is too unreal for him to be able, even through suffering, to touch reality. What he touches is his own image of what he sees, and he begins at once to adorn the image that he has made, to cover its true lineaments away under new veils of his own weaving. And his prayer, in all sincerity, is that prayer which Francis Jammes has set down in these two lines:

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De ne pas compatir assez à la douleur.'

He writes beautifully about sorrow, more beautifully because more truly than he has ever written. What, as he says, was to him little more than a phrase, when, in a story, he wrote, 'Is not He who made misery wiser than thou art?' has now become real; and he says it now more simply. But he does not say it simply. He must elaborate it with a conscious rhetoric, which keeps it always at the due distance from himself, and from us.

There is a passage referring to the death of his mother, which, in the published English text, reads thus: 'No one knew how deeply I loved and honoured her. Her death was terrible to me; but I, once a lord of language, have no words in which to express my anguish and my shame.' Here the 'lord of language' may already seem a trifle self-conscious, but in the original manuscript the sentence continues: 'never even in the most perfect days of my development as an artist, could I have had words fit to bear so august a burden, or to move with sufficient stateliness of music through the purple pageant of my incommunicable woe.' Already he is playing with his sorrow, genuine as that sorrow no doubt was; and the words are not words of irresistible beauty, but of carefully heightened rhetoric. In another passage he describes one of his moods in prison, how 'I determined to commit suicide on the very day on which I left prison. After a time that evil mood passed away, and I made up my mind to live, but to wear gloom as a king wears purple: never to smile again: to turn whatever house I entered into a house of mourning: to make my friends walk slowly in sadness with me: to teach them that melancholy is the true secret of life: to maim them with an alien sorrow: to mar them with my own pain. Now,' he adds, 'I feel quite differently.' But the mood, while it lasted, was a significant one: one of the moods of that drama which to him was life itself.

Perhaps the most revealing passage in the whole book is a passage omitted in the English version: 'I have said that to speak the truth is a painful thing. To be forced to tell lies is much worse. I remember as I was sitting in the dock on the occasion of my last trial, listening to Lockwood's appalling denunciation of me—like a thing out of Tacitus, like a passage in Dante, like one of Savonarola's indictments of the Popes at Rome—and being sickened with horror at what I heard. Suddenly it occurred to me, "How splendid it would be, if I was saying all this about myself!" I saw then at once that what is said of a man is nothing, the point is, who says it. A man's very highest moment is, I have no doubt at all, when he kneels in the dust and beats his breast, and tells all the sins of his life.' In that passage, which speaks straight, and has a fine eloquence in its simplicity, I seem to see the whole man summed up, and the secret of his life revealed. One sees that to him everything was drama, all the rest of the world and himself as well; himself indeed always at once the protagonist and the lonely king watching the play in the theatre emptied for his pleasure. After reading this passage one can understand that to him sin was a crisis in a play, and punishment another crisis, and that he was thinking all the time of the fifth act and the bow at the fall of the curtain. For he was to be the writer of the play as well as the actor and the spectator. 'I treated art,' he says, 'as the supreme reality, and life as a mere mode of fiction.' A mode of drama, he should have said.

The passage from which I quote this sentence is more definite as a statement of Wilde's belief of himself, and his belief in what he had done, than any other passage in the book. 'I had genius,' he says, 'a distinguished name, high social position, brilliancy, intellectual daring: I made art a philosophy, and philosophy an art: I altered the minds of men and the colours of things: there was nothing I said or did that did not make people wonder: I took the drama, the most objective form known to art, and made it as personal a mode of expression as the lyric or the sonnet: at the same time that I widened its range and enriched its characterization: drama, novel, poem in rhyme, poem in prose, subtle or fantastic dialogue, whatever I touched I made beautiful in a new mode of beauty: to truth itself I gave what is false no less than what is true as its rightful province, and showed that the false and the true are merely forms of intellectual existence: I treated art as the supreme reality, and life as a mere mode of fiction. I awoke the imagination of my century so that it created myth and legend around me. I summed up all systems in a phrase, and all existence in an epigram.'

That is scarcely even a challenge; it is a statement. There is no doubt that he believed it; and that so great a master of irony should have exposed himself to the irony of rational judgement is a sufficient evidence that here, as in other matters, solitude and constraint brought him no nearer to a realization of things as they

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were than he had been when, as he says in another place, 'I was to many an architect of style in art, the supreme arbiter to some.'

'An architect of style in art': certainly he was that, and there are pages in this book which are among the finest pages he has written. The book should be read aloud; its eloquence is calculated for the voice, and a beauty which scarcely seems to be in these lucid phrases as one reads them silently comes into them as they are spoken. 'There is always something of an excellent talker about the writing of Mr. Oscar Wilde,' said Walter Pater in his review of *Dorian Gray*; and it was that quality, of course, which helped Wilde to make, in his plays of modern life, the only real works of art in that kind which have been produced in English since Sheridan, and finer work, in some ways, certainly, than Sheridan's. And as, for the most part, he was a personality rather than an artist, a personality certainly more interesting than any of his work, it is natural and right that what is best in that work should always suggest actual talk, the talk of one who spoke subtly, brilliantly, with a darting and leaping intelligence. He was always at his best when he wrote in dialogue, or, as here, in the form of a letter. Either form allowed him that kind of intellectual freedom which he required: the personal appeal, either with a mask or without it.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

They were but shadows.

And then the parting swift—the unspoken fear—
The winding column, four abreast—the strong,
Quick tread of youth timed to a roar of song—
The vibrant cheer that, had it not been a cheer
Must else have been a sob—the backward glance
Over the shoulder. Then the singing dies,
The half-fest fails, and youth, with manhood's eyes,
Grim, purposeful, swings on to war, perchance
To honours earned, or to a hero's end. . . .
To death! Ah, worse than death, for I have crept
Out of the press of war (I that would have slept
Quiet on the hill where wooden crosses extend
Their most beseeching arms) a thing for tears!
A broken, battered, blinded wreck of one
That was made in God's image! Life but just
begun!

The shadows conquer; and though I have not years
I have no youth.

There is a love expressionless, and pain
Past all expression. Knowing each, I pray
For sleep, that so the Blessed Virgin may
Waken me in thy loving arms again.

D. F. FINN.

We also select for printing:

SORROW.

(After Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*.)

In the midst of our pleasure comes delicate wavering
sorrow,

And my love shall cover you warm, Lord,
From the blight and sod.

Make this your travelling road, Lord,
And my door a star,
Where the manna of faith and love, Lord,
All waiting are.

(Ivan Adair, 54, Palmerston Road, Dublin.)

HANNAH'S LULLABY.

The long road quiet now,
My precious one;
No more the hasting feet,
For day is done;
Only the cool of night,
My little son.

Jehovah revered is
In Shiloh fair;
Thy father's sacrifice
Goodly and rare:
But here, I worship Him
Who heard my prayer.

The years so dark in front
Seem dim with pain,
Though grudge I not the Lord
His own again,
But, little wise-eyed babe,
My heart seems slain.

THE BOOKMAN PRIZE COMPETITIONS.

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THE BOOKMAN.

NOVEMBER, 1918.

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NOVEMBER, 1918.

Answers to these competitions (each on a separate sheet bearing the name and address of the sender) should be forwarded not later than the 14th of the month to

"The Prize Page," THE BOOKMAN, Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, Warwick Square, E.C.4. *Colonial and foreign readers please note that Competitions II., IV. and V. are the same each month, and that for the next two months the first prize will be for the best original lyric.*

SPECIAL NOTICE.—Competitors must please keep copies of their verses; the Editor cannot undertake to return them. **WAR TIME NOTICE.**—The subjects of four of these competitions are the same every month, and to meet the convenience of competitors who live at a distance and, nowadays, cannot always obtain their copies of THE BOOKMAN punctually, we shall announce in each Number the subject of the fifth (i.e. No. 3 Competition) both for the current month and the month following, as below.

I.—A PRIZE OF ONE GUINEA is offered for the best original lyric.

II.—A PRIZE OF HALF A GUINEA is offered for the best quotation from English verse applicable to any review or the name of any author or book appearing in this number of THE BOOKMAN. Preference will be given to quotations of a humorous nature.

III.—A PRIZE OF THREE NEW BOOKS is offered for the best motto from any British or American author for the proposed League of Nations.

(The Prize of Three New Books will be offered next month for the best eight lines of original verse addressed to our soldiers on the prospect of Peace.)

IV.—A PRIZE OF HALF A GUINEA is offered for the best review, in not more than one hundred words, of any recently published book. Competitors should give the names of Authors and Publishers at head of review.

V.—A copy of THE BOOKMAN will be sent *post free* for *twelve months* to the sender of the best suggestion for THE BOOKMAN Competitions. The Editor reserves the right to use any suggestion submitted.

RESULTS OF COMPETITIONS FOR OCTOBER.

I.—The Prize for the best lyric is divided, and HALF A GUINEA each awarded to Miss M. Crump, of 14b, Ashbourne Mansions, Hendon, N.W.4, and to 36782 Sergeant D. F. Finn, Norfolk Regiment, c/o Mrs. Brown, 19, Balfour Road, Birkenhead, for the following:

HYMN TO FLORA.

Dawn is here, but our Lady lingers;

Hasten, Goddess, thy children pray.

Touch the buds with thy dewy fingers,

Bid them blossom to greet the day.

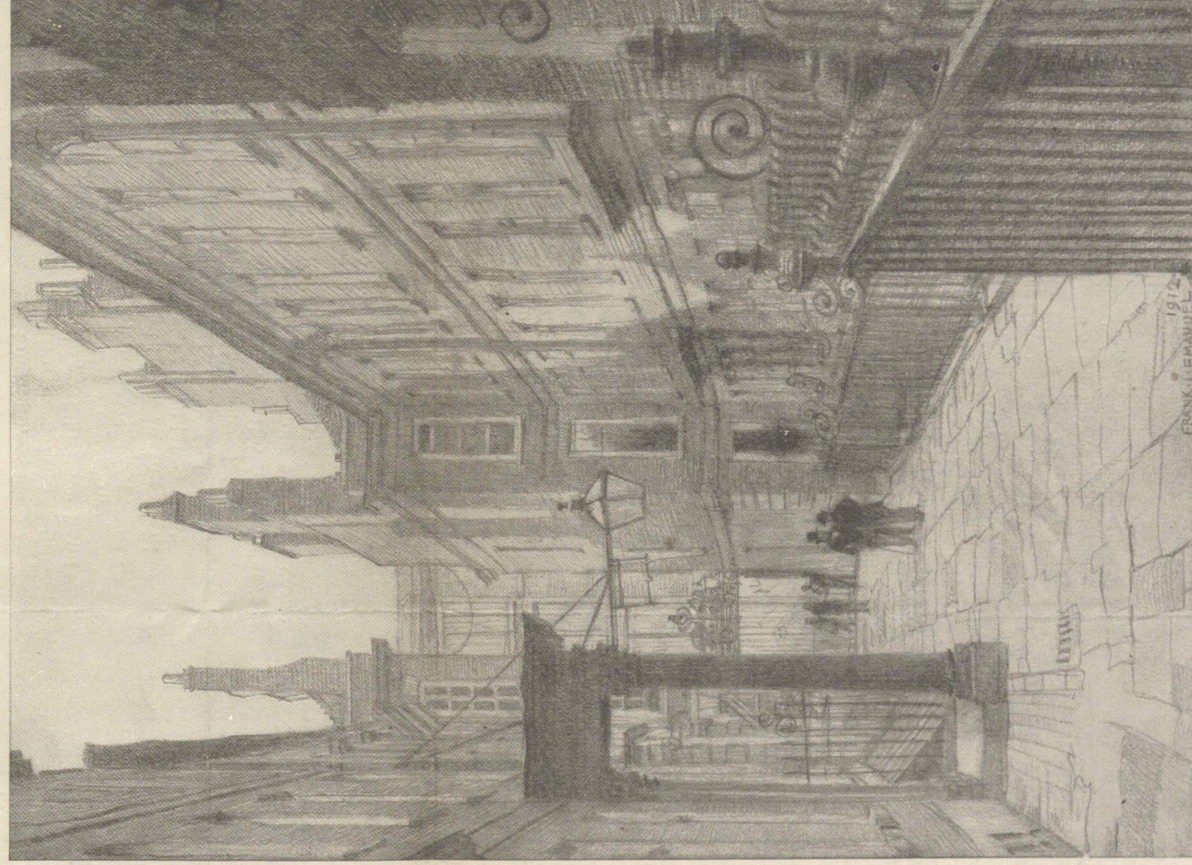
Hark the hymn of the temple singers
Ringing about thy way!

Take the gifts that our hands are bringing,
Roses that round thine altar climb,

Iris tall in the grass upspringing,

Stately lilies and fragrant thyme,

Garlands culled where the birds were singing
High in the bee-loved lime.



Catherine Court,
Tower Hill, London.

Drawn by F. L. Emanuel
From "The English Home from Charles I. to George IV.," by J. Alfred Gatch, which Messrs. Batsford and Co. have just published.

Brown bees hover about thy tresses,
Wild things follow in shy desire;
Light winds woo thee with soft caresses,
Song-birds hymn thee, nor cease, nor tire;
Far through the groves thy presence blesses
Poppies spring up like fire.

Night shall come and shall find us waking;
Raise ye the song of praise anew!
On through the glens your torches shaking,
Living lanterns the long night through,
Till the dawn in the far east breaking
Shines on the fields of dew.

Harken, Goddess, and let thy light
Clothe the earth with a finer grace.
Give the shepherd, who wakes to-night,
Joy in a glimpse of thy passing face.
Lo, we twine of these earthly flow'rs
Fading garlands, a gift for thee;
Let those offerings frail of ours
Shine anew in thy garden bow'rs,
Where thou dreamest through summer hours
In the vales of Arcady.

M. CRUMP.

ON RETURNING FROM WAR.

Do you remember, love, not long ago,
That winter fireside in a northern land
Where we sat idly dreaming while your hand
Touched mine? Before us in the fiery glow
The unending pageant of the future passed
With crimson magic dyed; and in the night
Outside the creeping darkness hid the light
Of winter's faint, grey twilight; and the blast
Wailed and whimpered, tried the noisy latch
And shook the pane and shook the forked flame;
And from the gloom the monstrous shadows came;
Leaping o'er wall and ceiling, swift to snatch
With crooked fingers at our souls' content,
Then sink back mouthing, inarticulate,
In impotent hate. They could not penetrate
Our souls on whirling dreams of passion intent.
They were but shadows.

And then the parting swift—the unspoken fear—
The winding column, four abreast—the strong,
Quick tread of youth timed to a roar of song—
The vibrant cheer that, had it not been a cheer
Must else have been a sob—the backward glance
Over the shoulder. Then the singing dies,
The half-fest falls, and youth, with manhood's eyes,
Grim, purposeful, swings on to war, perchance
To honours earned, or to a hero's end.
To death! Ah, worse than death, for I have crept
Out of the press of war (I that would have slept
Quiet on the hill where wooden crosses extend
Their most beseeching arms) a thing for tears!
A broken, battered, blinded wreck of one
That was made in God's image! Life but just
begun!
The shadows conquer; and though I have not years
I have no youth.

There is a love expressionless, and pain
Past all expression. Knowing each, I pray
For sleep, that so the Blessed Virgin may
Waken me in thy loving arms again.

D. F. FINN.

We also select for printing:

SORROW.

(After Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*.)
In the midst of our pleasure comes delicate wavering
sorrow,

Like the scent of that rose which you see will be fading
to-morrow.
It is ours, ours alone
And, though never a moan
Shall declare it, the wound is too deep any comfort to
borrow.

Should a rough hand come near it unheeding, what exquisite
pain
Does it pour out in blood that no effort of ours can restrain.
And though love lightly touch,
Be it scarcely as much
As a breath, it will flow—but with tenderest sorrow—
again.

Where sorrow is, sanctity hovers and holy's the ground,
This supreme emotion that through a man's soul may
resound
Of our art and our life
Is a test, and a strife
Which perchance teaches all of the truth that a human
has found.

(Mary Salford, 30, Newstead Grove, Nottingham.)

COMMUNION.

I have swept my soul's hearth clean, Lord,
And kindled a fire,
And my table is spread and garnished, Lord,
With Love's desire.

I have opened my heart's door wide, Lord,
So that afar
The glow of my fire shall gleam, Lord,
Bright as a star.

If You should be passing by, Lord,
Wearied or cold,
You might make of my humble heart, Lord,
A sheltering fold.

There is room on my glowing hearth, Lord,
For the Lamb of God,
And my love shall cover you warm, Lord,
From the blight and sod.

Make this your travelling road, Lord,
And my door a star,
Where the manna of faith and love, Lord,
All waiting are.
(Ivan Adair, 54, Palmerston Road, Dublin.)

HANNAH'S LULLABY.

The long road quiet now,
My precious one;
No more the hastening feet,
For day is done;
Only the cool of night,
My little son.

Jehovah revered is
In Shiloh fair;
Thy father's sacrifice
Goodly and rare;
But here, I worship Him
Who heard my prayer.

The years so dark in front
Seem dim with pain,
Though grudge I not the Lord
His own again,
But, little wise-eyed babe,
My heart seems slain.

were than he had been when, as he says in another place, 'I was to many an architect of style in art, the supreme arbiter to some.'

'An architect of style in art': certainly he was that, and there are pages in this book which are among the finest pages he has written. The book should be read aloud; its eloquence is calculated for the voice, and a beauty which scarcely seems to be in these lucid phrases as one reads them silently comes into them as they are spoken. 'There is always something of an excellent talker about the writing of Mr. Oscar Wilde,' said Walter Pater in his review of *Dorian Gray*; and it was that quality, of course, which helped Wilde to make, in his plays of modern life, the only real works of art in that kind which have been produced in English since Sheridan, and finer work, in some ways, certainly, than Sheridan's. And as, for the most part, he was a personality rather than an artist, a personality certainly more interesting than any of his work, it is natural and right that what is best in that work should always suggest actual talk, the talk of one who spoke subtly, brilliantly, with a darting and leaping intelligence. He was always at his best when he wrote in dialogue, or, as here, in the form of a letter. Either form allowed him that kind of intellectual freedom which he required: the personal appeal, either with a mask or without it.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

THE BOOKMAN PRIZE COMPETITIONS.

NOVEMBER, 1918.

Answers to these competitions (each on a separate sheet bearing the name and address of the sender) should be forwarded not later than the 14th of the month to

"The Prize Page," THE BOOKMAN, Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, Warwick Square, E.C.4.

Colonial and foreign readers please note that Competitions II., IV. and V. are the same each month, and that for the next two months the first prize will be for the best original lyric.

SPECIAL NOTICE.—Competitors must please keep copies of their verses; the Editor cannot undertake to return them.

WAR TIME NOTICE.—The subjects of four of these competitions are the same every month, and to meet the convenience of competitors who live at a distance and, nowadays, cannot always obtain their copies of THE BOOKMAN punctually, we shall announce in each Number the subject of the fifth (i.e. No. 3 Competition) both for the current month and the month following, as below.

I.—A PRIZE OF ONE GUINEA is offered for the best original lyric.

II.—A PRIZE OF HALF A GUINEA is offered for the best quotation from English verse applicable to any review or the name of any author or book appearing in this number of THE BOOKMAN. Preference will be given to quotations of a humorous nature.

III.—A PRIZE OF THREE NEW BOOKS is offered for the best motto from any British or American author for the proposed League of Nations.

(The Prize of Three New Books will be offered next month for the best eight lines of original verse addressed to our soldiers on the prospect of Peace.)

IV.—A PRIZE OF HALF A GUINEA is offered for the best review, in not more than one hundred words, of any recently published book. Competitors should give the names of Authors and Publishers at head of review.

V.—A copy of THE BOOKMAN will be sent *post free* for twelve months to the sender of the best suggestion for THE BOOKMAN Competitions. The Editor reserves the right to use any suggestion submitted.

RESULTS OF COMPETITIONS FOR OCTOBER.

I.—The Prize for the best lyric is divided, and HALF A GUINEA each awarded to Miss M. Crump, of 14b, Ashbourne Mansions, Hendon, N.W.4, and to 36782 Sergeant D. F. Finn, Norfolk Regiment, c/o Mrs. Brown, 19, Balfour Road, Birkenhead, for the following:

HYMN TO FLORA.

Dawn is here, but our Lady
lingers;
Hasten, Goddess, thy children
pray.
Touch the buds with thy dewy
fingers,

Bid them blossom to greet the day.
Hark the hymn of the temple singers
Ringing about thy way!

Take the gifts that our hands are bringing,
Roses that round thine altar climb,
Iris tall in the grass upspringing,
Stately lilies and fragrant thyme,
Garlands culled where the birds were singing
High in the bee-loved lime.



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