

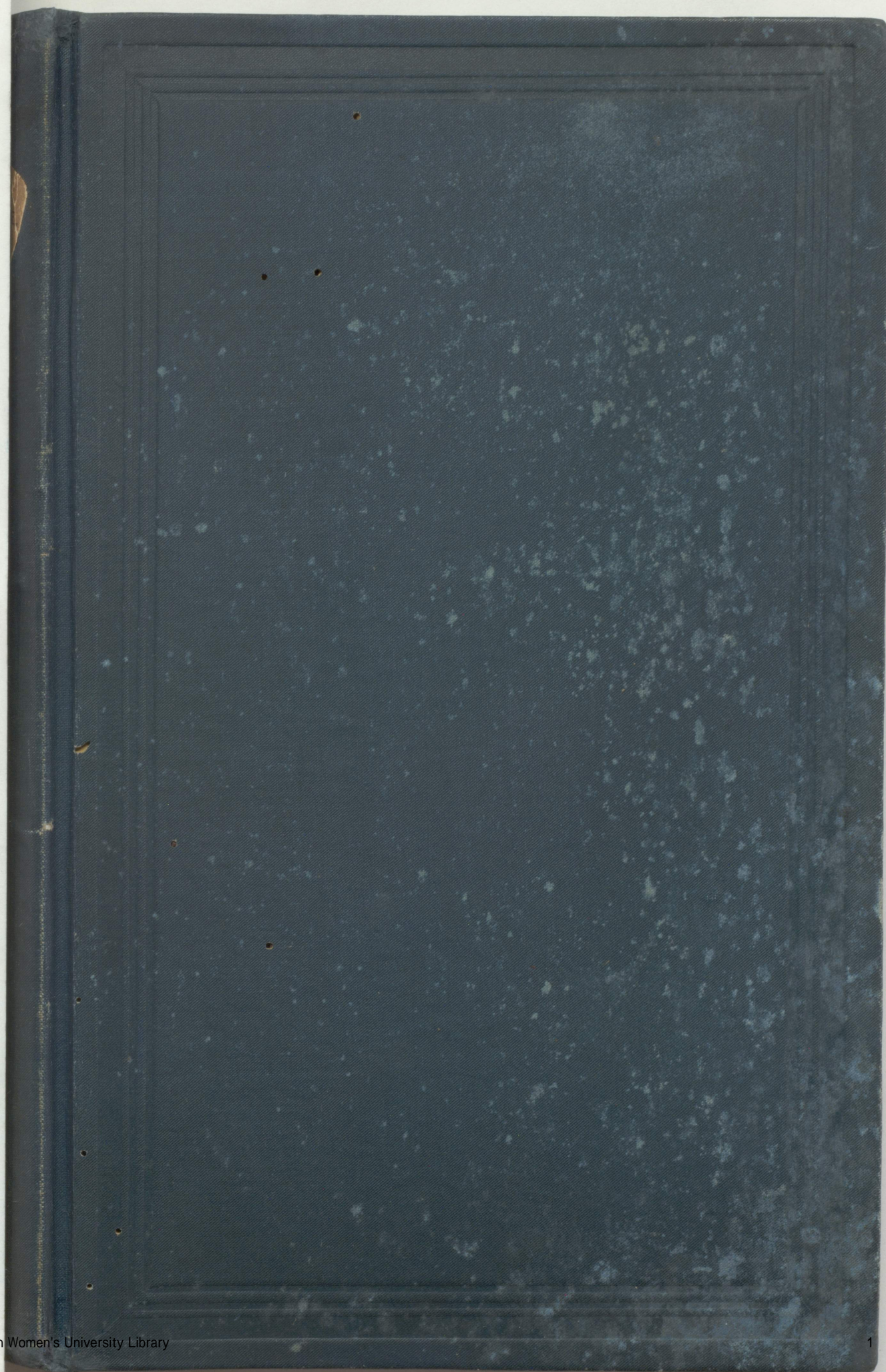
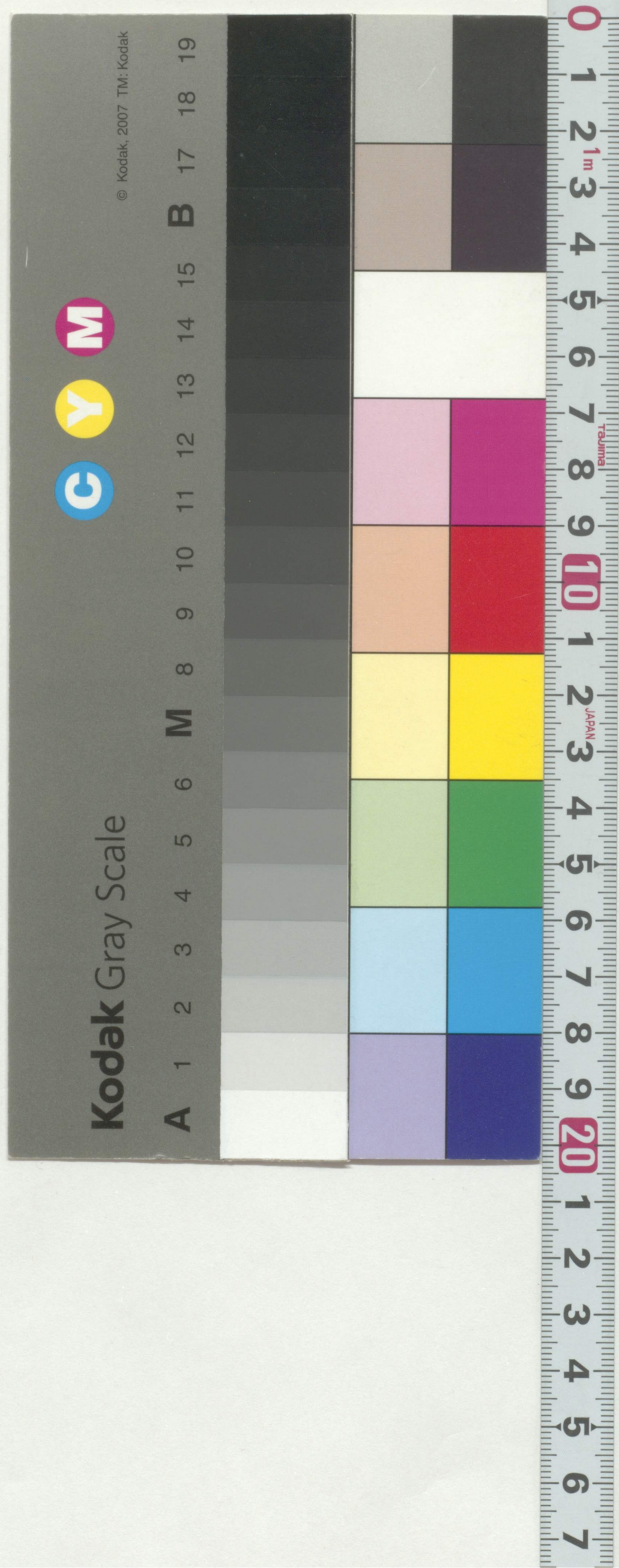


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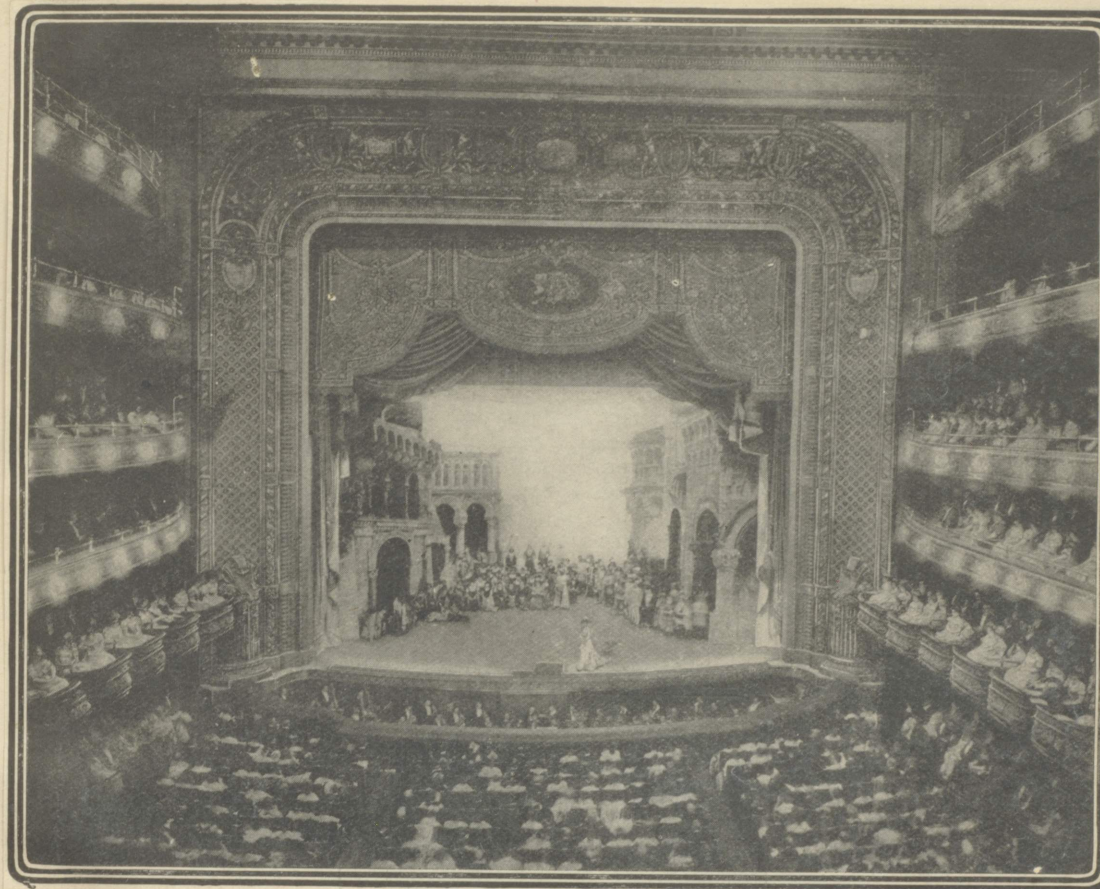
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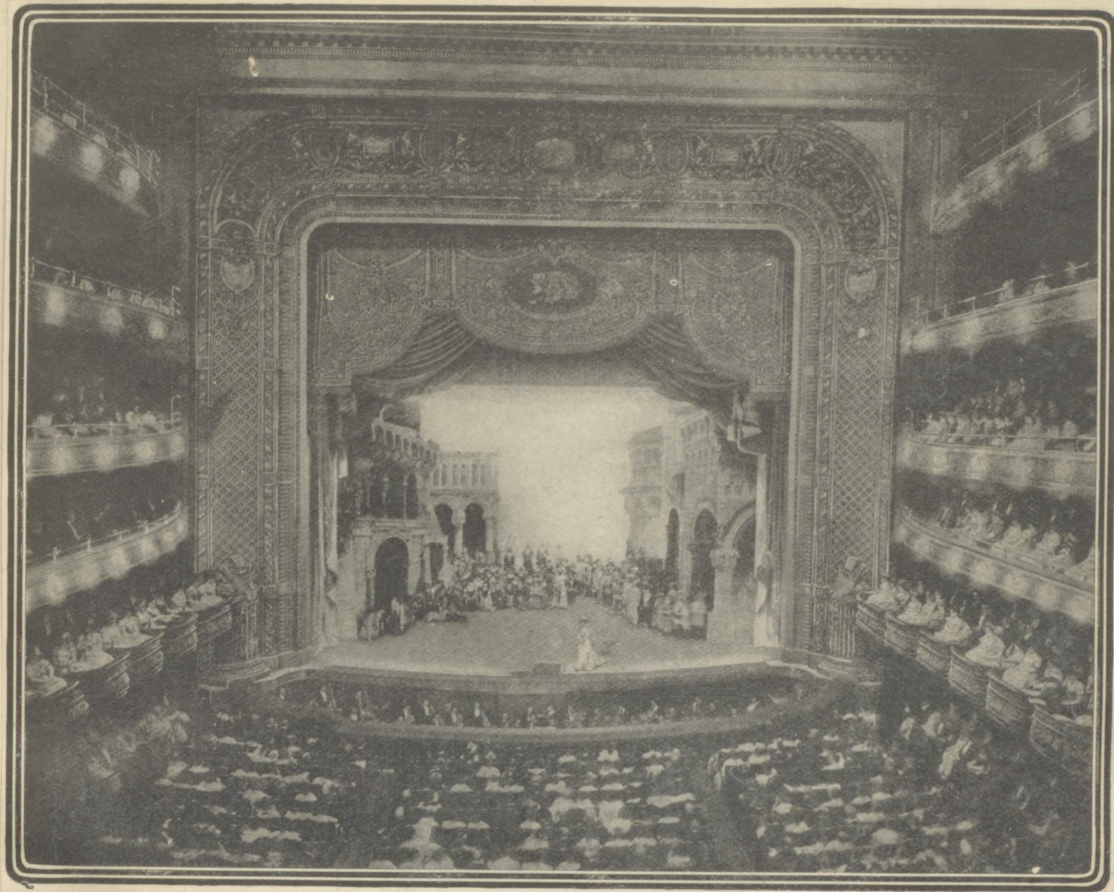
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"Salome," by Richard Strauss and Oscar Wilde, was recently produced by Mr. Conried at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York. The result was an artistic success, and various protests by believers in "Comstockery." The dancing and the kissing of the head of John the Baptist seem to have been the chief causes of the trouble. It may be mentioned that the opera has already been seen on thirty stages in Europe. At the moment of writing, it is likely that Mr. Conried will transfer his production to another city, or to other cities.



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[Published To-day.]

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Then the gaol doors closed behind him, and his fame was cut off clean, as by a guillotine. From that day to this nothing has been heard of him except as the author of the "Ballad of Reading Gaol," which was published shortly after his release. And now, after the world had given up the problem of his personality, when his career is so ancient a history that it is possible to revive his plays, comes this amazing volume. It was—unlike the "Ballad"—written in gaol, towards the close of his two years' imprisonment with hard labour. According to Mr. Robert Ross, to whom the letter was addressed, it was the last prose work he ever wrote. It was also the first piece of self-revelation he ever wrote.

The expression must not be misunderstood. The book is a sketch of the author's spiritual development under suffering; but, as might be imagined, that development does not precisely follow the lines approved by Dr. Torrey and General Booth. There is little of the penitent form: there is a great deal of wrestling with the Angel. Much of the book is far too sacred and intimate for comment: but perhaps what will most forcibly strike the reader is the unexpectedness of it all. It is not easy to reconcile the Oscar Wilde of popular legend with the convict who writes: "People point to Reading Gaol and say, 'That is where the artistic life leads a man.' Well, it might lead to worse places"; or this:—

The two great turning-points of my life were when my father sent me to Oxford, and when society sent me to prison. I will not say that prison is the best thing that could have happened to me; for that phrase would savour of too great bitterness towards myself. I would sooner say, or hear it said of me, that I was so typical a child of my age, that in my perversity, and for that perversity's sake, I turned the good things of my life to evil, and the evil things of my life to good.

It is not, of course, that prison life was not irksome, or was made easier, to him. To such a temperament as his—pleasure-loving, undisciplined, and with a passionate love for the beautiful in Nature—the ordinary discomforts and degradations of prison must have been terribly accentuated. There is a striking passage at the beginning of the book in which he describes the "paralysing immobility" of the life:—

Of seed-time or harvest, of the reapers bending over the corn, or the grape gatherers threading through the vines, of the grass in the orchard made white with broken blossoms or strewn with fallen fruit: of these we know nothing, and can know nothing.

For us there is only one season, the season of sorrow. The very sun and moon seem taken from us. Outside, the day may be blue and gold, but the light that creeps down through the 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. And in the sphere of thought, no less than in the sphere of time, motion is no more. The thing that you personally have long ago forgotten, or can easily forget, is happening to me now, and will happen to me again to-morrow.

OSCAR WILDE.

HIS LAST BOOK AND HIS LAST YEARS.

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Oscar Wilde was released from prison in May, 1897. He records in his letters the joy of the thought that at that time "both the lilac and the laburnum will be blooming in the gardens." The closing sentences of the book may be recalled: "Society, as we have constituted it, will have no place for me, has none to offer; but Nature, whose sweet rains fall on unjust and just alike, will have clefts in the rocks where I may hide, and secret valleys in whose silence I may weep undisturbed. She will hang the night with stars so that I may walk abroad in the darkness without stumbling, and send the wind over my footprints so that none may track me to my hurt: she will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole."

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True, Oscar Wilde, who for several years before his conviction had been making at least £5,000 a year, found it very hard to live on his rather precarious income after he came out of prison; he was often very "hard up," and often did not know where to turn for a coin, but I will undertake to prove to anyone whom it may concern that from the day he left prison till the day of his death his income averaged at least £400 a year. He had, moreover, far too many devoted friends in Paris ever to be in need of a meal provided he would take the trouble to walk a few hundred yards or take a cab to one of half a dozen houses. His death certainly was tragic—deaths are apt to be tragic—but he was surrounded by friends when he died, and his funeral was not cheap; I happen to have paid for it in conjunction with another friend of his, so I ought to know.

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The two great turning-points of my life were when my father sent me to Oxford, and when society sent me to prison. I will not say that prison is the best thing that could have happened to me; for that phrase would savour of too great bitterness towards myself. I would sooner say, or hear it said of me, that I was so typical a child of my age, that in my perversity, and for that perversity's sake, I turned the good things of my life to evil, and the evil things of my life to good.

It is not, of course, that prison life was not irksome, or was made easier, to him. To such a temperament as his—pleasure-loving, undisciplined, and with a passionate love for the beautiful in Nature—the ordinary discomforts and degradations of prison must have been terribly accentuated. There is a striking passage at the beginning of the book in which he describes the "paralysing immobility" of the life:—

Of seed-time or harvest, of the reapers bending over the corn, or the grape gatherers threading through the vines, of the grass in the orchard made white with broken blossoms or strewn with fallen fruit: of these we know nothing, and can know nothing.

For us there is only one season, the season of sorrow. The very sun and moon seem taken from us. Outside, the day may be blue and gold, but the light that creeps down through the thickly-muffled glass of the small iron-barred window beneath which one sits is grey and niggard. It is always twilight, and twilight is all that is in one's heart. And in the sphere of thought, no less than in the sphere of time, motion is no more. The thing that you personally have long ago forgotten, or can easily forget, is happening to me now, and will happen to me again to-morrow.

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The dominant note of these confessions is the mystic adoration of sorrow which runs through them. "There is no truth," he writes, "comparable to sorrow. There are times when sorrow seems to me to be the only truth. Other things may be illusions of the eye or the appetite, made to blind the one and cloy the other, but out of sorrow have the worlds been built, and at the birth of a child or a star there is pain." It was, he admits, a discovery to him, though, with a characteristic touch of egoism, he recalls that all this later knowledge was prefigured in his books. He recalls especially the phrase of the bishop in "The Young King," who says, "Is not He who made misery wiser than thou art?" admitting that when he wrote it the words "seemed to me little more than a phrase."

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I have lain in prison for nearly two years. Out of my nature has come wild despair; an abandonment to grief that was piteous even to look at; terrible and impotent rage; bitterness and scorn; anguish that wept aloud; misery that could find no voice; sorrow that was dumb. I have passed through every possible mood of suffering. Better than Wordsworth himself I know what Wordsworth meant when he said—

"Suffering is permanent, obscure, and dark,
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But while there were times when I rejoiced in the idea that my sufferings were to be endless, I could not bear them to be without meaning. Now 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.

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There will, no doubt, be found some to say that the psychological problem which seems to be offered in this book does not exist in fact, the author maintained that conduct." Later he says: "I hope to live long enough to produce morals, so in this work of such a character that I shall be able at the end of my days to say, 'Yes, that is just where the artistic life leads a man!'" Why these resolutions were never fulfilled we do not know, and probably never shall know. All the more touching are the closing pages of a book which, apart from its importance as one of the most poignant and luminous human documents of all time, will surely live as a consummate piece of literature. He was to be released in May. "I tremble with pleasure," he says, "when I think that on the very day of my leaving prison both the laburnum and the lilac will be blooming in the gardens and that I shall see the wind either, in this stir with restless beauty the swaying gold of the one, and make or else the severest the other toss the pale purple of its plumes so that all the air shall leave a man still gibe Arabia for me."

Still, I am conscious now that behind all this beauty, satisfying though it may be, there is some spirit hidden of which the painted forms and shapes are but modes of manifestation, and it is with this spirit that I desire to become in harmony. Society, as we have constituted it, will have no place for me, has none to offer; but Nature, whose sweet rains fall on unjust and just alike, will have clefts in the rocks where I may hide, and secret valleys in whose silence I may weep undisturbed. She will hang the night with stars so that I may walk abroad in the darkness without stumbling, and send the wind over my footprints so that none may track me to my hurt; she will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole.

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ALABAMA COLLIERY DISASTER.

Of the seventy-six bodies so far recovered from the Virginia Mine Birmingham (Alabama) only one was not mutilated. Many were even identifiable. The Commercial Club of Birmingham, after raising £600 for the benefit of the destitute families, has issued an appeal to the public.—Reuter.

OPERATIONS AGAINST RAISOULI.

The "Petit Parisien," in a Tangier telegram, says:—"It is announced that the Tangier garrison will make a sortie to-day, and will join a force already operating against Raisouli in the K. region. People are beginning to apprehend conflicts between French and Spanish workmen."—Reuter.

CLOCK "PRESENTED BY QUEEN ANNE."

A historic clock of the grandfather pattern, bearing the inscription "Presented by Queen Anne," has just been placed in the Earl of Selborne's private room at the Admiralty, having been removed from the old buildings in Whitehall. The clock has a double dial of figures and requires winding only once a year. So far as is known there is no record of the presentation by Queen Anne.

February 23, 1905.

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Prison life makes me see people and things as they really are. . . . It is the people outside who are deceived by the illusions of a life in constant motion. They revolve with life and contribute to its unreality. We who are immobile both see and know.

Either, in this book, Oscar Wilde speaks face to face with realities, or else the severest punishment known to English law can at the end leave a man still grimacing at the facts of life. Of the two miracles most people will think the first the less incredible.

It is true that the book invites the question: What was the effect of these experiences on the few years that elapsed between the author's release and his death? There is no answer to the query. Oscar Wilde had no illusions on the point. "For me," he writes, "the world is shrivelled to a handbreadth, and everywhere I turn my name is written on the rocks in lead." There is pathetic significance in the fact that certain projects alluded to in this book were never carried out. He mentions specifically two topics on which he proposed to write: "Christ as the precursor of the romantic move-

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The writer's references to his trial and punishment—for which a curious world will be agape—are candid and without bitterness. An old friend called on him to protest belief in his innocence. "I burst into tears at what he said, and told him that, while there was much among the definite charges that was quite untrue . . . still that my life had been full of perverse pleasures, and that unless he accepted that as a fact . . . I could not possibly be friends with him any more, or even be in his company." Elsewhere he tells the story of his fall and of his repentance.

ment in life," and "The artistic life considered in its relation to conduct." Later he says: "I hope to live long enough to produce work of such a character that I shall be able at the end of my days to say, 'Yes, that is just where the artistic life leads a man!'" Why these resolutions were never fulfilled we do not know, and probably never shall know. All the more touching are the closing pages of a book which, apart from its importance as one of the most poignant and luminous human documents of all time, will surely live as a consummate piece of literature. He was to be released in May. "I tremble with pleasure," he says, "when I think that on the very day of my leaving prison both the laburnum and the lilac will be blooming in the gardens and that I shall see the wind stir with restless beauty the swaying gold of the one, and make the other toss the pale purple of its plumes so that all the air shall be Arabia for me."

Still, I am conscious now that behind all this beauty, satisfying though it may be, there is some spirit hidden of which the painted forms and shapes are but modes of manifestation, and it is with this spirit that I desire to become in harmony. . . . Society, as we have constituted it, will have no place for me, has none to offer; but Nature, whose sweet rains fall on unjust and just alike, will have clefts in the rocks where I may hide, and secret valleys in whose silence I may weep undisturbed. She will hang the night with stars so that I may walk abroad in the darkness without stumbling, and send the wind over my footprints so that none may track me to my hurt: she will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole.

And none who read the book but will hope the prayer was heard.

the Oscar Wilde who went into prison and the Oscar Wilde who came out.

There is a large section of this book to which it is possible to refer only with some diffidence. Fifty pages are given over to what is practically a sermon—a wholly unconventional sermon, but one of supreme force, originality, and beauty—on the life and character of Christ. The very independence of his outlook—for his spiritual development left him as far as ever from any of the recognised “Churches”—lends peculiar interest to the reflections suggested to him by the perusal of the prison Greek Testament. “Every morning,” he says, “after I had cleaned my cell and polished my tins, I read a little of the Gospels, a dozen verses taken by chance anywhere. It is a delightful way of opening the day.” The attraction was in this case twofold. Till Oscar Wilde had come to realise the meaning of sorrow, he was not likely to realise the message of the Man of Sorrows. But behind all the personal element, it is plain that Oscar Wilde was profoundly moved by the æsthetic appeal of the Gospels. “Christ’s entire life,” he says, “is the most wonderful of poems”; and the basis of His nature he finds to be the same as that of the nature of the artist—“an intense and flame-like imagination.” Again, he observes that Christ is “just like a work of art.”

He does not really teach one anything, but by being brought into his presence one becomes something. And everybody is predestined to his presence. Once at least in his life each man walks with Christ to Emmaus.

“Dangerous” doctrines, no doubt, and there are some even more heretical. But the orthodoxy is as strange as the heterodoxy:—

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.

But it is only one of a multitude of marvels in this book to find the typical cynic of the nineteenth century championing the authenticity of miracles.

There will, no doubt, be found some to say that the psychological problem which seems to be offered in this book does not exist; that, in fact, the author posed to the end, and that, as he had always maintained that Art was concerned with utterance and not with morals, so in this last effort of all he aimed merely at producing a beautiful piece of literature. Beautiful, supremely beautiful, it is; but that it merely represents a *tour de force* of hypocrisy is not to be believed. The solitude and the discipline of prison life are an infallible solvent of shams; and it is perhaps in anticipation of some such criticism that the author states so emphatically in his preface:—

Prison life makes me see people and things as they really are. . . . It is the people outside who are deceived by the illusions of a life in constant motion. They revolve with life and contribute to its unreality. We who are immobile both see and know.

Either, in this book, Oscar Wilde speaks face to face with realities, or else the severest punishment known to English law can at the end leave a man still grimacing at the facts of life. Of the two miracles most people will think the first the less incredible.

It is true that the book invites the question: What was the effect of these experiences on the few years that elapsed between the author’s release and his death? There is no answer to the query. Oscar Wilde had no illusions on the point. “For me,” he writes, “the world is shrivelled to a handbreadth, and everywhere I turn my name is written on the rocks in lead.” There is pathetic significance in the fact that the two questions which he proposed in this book were never carried out. He mentions specifically two topics on which he proposed to write: “Christ as the precursor of the romantic move-

G. P. O.

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As was seen in Adolf Beck's case, where nine petitions appear in the Commissioner Report (Blue Book), a prisoner's liberty, fortune, reputation, and life may be at stake, but he must tell his story on two and a half sheets of foolscap. Not a scrap of paper is allowed over the regulation sheets. In a local prison Oscar Wilde could apply for the privilege of a special visit or a letter, and probably would receive it, but as the official visitors of prisoners are simply parts of a solemn farce, and there is no such stereotyped method as giving a prisoner the slightest relief in matters affecting the intellect, I have grave doubts that such facilities were ever given as supplying pen, ink and paper to write "De Profundis."

If it was otherwise the following process would have had to be gone through, either an application to the official prison visitor (possibly Major Arthur Griffiths) for leave to have pen, ink and paper in his cell, which would be refused. By the influence of friends, or the statement of his solicitors that they required special instructions in reference to some evidence, his case, or his property, leave might be granted, but not for journalistic or literary purposes. Had Oscar Wilde's sentence been that of a "first-class misdemeanant" he could have had those privileges, but I never heard that his sentence was mitigated in this respect.

Or, he might have applied to the visiting magistrates. In either case there would be a record of such facilities, and the Governor of Reading gaol, the chaplain, and other officials can satisfy the public as well as the Prison Commissioners. If the book was written in prison then it is clear the officials made a distinction between Oscar Wilde and other prisoners.

There is some glamour about books written in prisons. The "Pilgrim's Progress" is a prison book, but Bedford gaol was a pretty easy dungeon. Under the old regime such men as William Cobbett, Orator Hunt, and Richard Carlile, conducted their polemic warfare in prison. The last Chartist leader (the late Mr. Ernest Jones) used to tell how he wrote the "Painter of Florence," and other poems in a London gaol while confined for sedition. It was a common subject of conversation with his young disciples how, as ink was denied in Coldbath-street prison, he made incisions in his arm and wrote his poetry in his own blood. We believed it then, but as we grew older that feeling of doubt made us sceptical. Thomas Cooper's prison rhyme, the "Purgatory of Suicides," and his novel the "Baron's Yule Feast," were written during his two years' imprisonment in Stafford gaol for preaching a "universal strike" as a means of establishing a British Republic.

As "De Profundis" is likely to be a classic, is it not as well to have this question thrashed out at the beginning and not leave it to the twenty-first century?

ANTHONY COLLINS.

Sir,—At mid-day to-day I had a visit from a friend whom I had not seen for twenty years, one who with myself had been Oscar Wilde's closest and most intimate friend in our undergraduate days at Magdalen. He came to me to-day specially to inquire what I knew as to Wilde's reception into the Catholic Church before his death. I was able to inform him as to this on the best possible evidence, that of the universally-respected head of the English Passionist community in Paris, one of whose members visited Wilde at his own earnest wish, gave him (while still in fullest consciousness) all those ministrations which can only be given to those who are in that condition, and remained with him to the last. My friend heard all I had to say, and departed more than satisfied not only with the evidence of the fact, but with the fact itself; for he (though not himself a Catholic) knew, as we all had done in those far-off days, that only the consolations of Catholicism could—as they in fact did—bring our friend peace at the last.

I have no wish for controversy on this matter; but when I read in your columns to-night, from a source which you describe as "of unquestioned authenticity," that Wilde "did not become a Roman Catholic before he died," that when received "he had been unconscious for many hours" (an absolute impossibility, as every Catholic knows), and that "he died without having any idea of the liberty which had been taken with his unconscious body," I cannot permit such statements to go unchallenged and uncontradicted. I, having the best reason to know the truth, do contradict those which I have cited in the most unqualified manner, knowing them as I do, on the best possible authority, to be exactly contrary to the fact.

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"A.", the writer of the articles, to whom the above letter was submitted, writes:—

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The fact is that the head of the English Passionist community in Paris knows absolutely nothing about the matter beyond the fact that on a certain day a member of his community was requested to go and receive the dying Oscar Wilde into the Roman Catholic Church under what circumstances and with what authority I have already related. That member of the Passionist community, whom I had the honour of meeting and conversing with at Oscar Wilde's funeral, received Oscar Wilde into the Church while he was, as I have stated, completely unconscious. Whether or not by so doing he achieved the feat of performing that which, according to "O.", is "an absolute impossibility as every Catholic knows," is a question which, not being versed in the subtleties of Roman Catholic theology, I do not feel qualified to discuss.

Sir,—If the statements contained in Mr. Oscar Wilde's posthumous work, "De Profundis," are true, as there seems to be no reason to doubt, they certainly demand the serious consideration of the Home Secretary.

To those who are not past feeling, a gang of convicts, with their cropped hair and hideous dress, which would make the best man look abandoned, is a sorry sight indeed. But for a person of education and refinement to be compelled to form one of such a company must be a more terrible punishment even than the loss of liberty or the hardships of a prison life.

If, then, we are to have prisoners—hand-cuffed, and in prison garb—exposed to public view, and mocked in their misery by crowds of grinning Yahoos, we had better return to the more merciful methods of the good old times, when men and women were hanged for larceny.

A. KIPLING COMMON.

8, Gray's-inn-place, Gray's-inn, W.C., March 3, 1905.

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As to the facts about his life in Paris after his release, it is quite true that I saw very little of him during the last year of his life. For one thing I was traveling outside of France, and for another Wilde was then surrounded with friends whom I did not care to meet—friends like "A," who can turn his death into a jest and seek an advertisement in the amount of the undertaker's bill. What I have published about his life in Paris was mainly derived from the statements of his landlord, Monsieur Dupoirrier, of the Hotel d'Alsace, rue des Beaux-Arts. Monsieur Dupoirrier has repeatedly told me and others—

1. That he one night found Wilde in the streets of Paris without a domicile. He had been turned out of the hotel he was living in in the rue Marsollier, and had no money for a night's lodging;
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As to the hotel and the room in which Wilde passed the last months of his life, one does not wish to hurt the feelings of the excellent Monsieur Dupoirrier, and all I will say—for anyone curious in the matter can visit it himself—is that in London his room would be considered dear at a rental of four shillings a week. It is a small gloomy room looking out on a courtyard, furnished with the stained and musty furniture of the cheap hotel garni.

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And I think that not the least tragic thing in Oscar Wilde's life in Paris was that the cruel contempt of the world forced him to associate once more with the very men whom in his "De Profundis" he had renounced for ever—men who, *par acquit de conscience*, used to throw him now and then a little silver of their gold, or, when they want a diversion, fetched him from his gloomy solitude in the Latin Quarter to entertain them at dinner, be it at Paillard's or at the Grand.

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ROBERT HARBOROUGH SHERARD.

Vernon (Eure), France, March 7, 1905.

Sir,—My object is to satisfy what I believe those who admired the dramatist and man ventured to hope it was the author. These platitudes that every one quite unknown to me no exception to the rule particular moment is fulfilment of an old promise. On two former occasions as a young man, and Cuthbert Dunn, of the your Catholic correspondence prevent "A" from being a Catholic, and faith cannot have much time, and it is hard.

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THE WILDE

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"A. L., October 19, 1898, dated Paris, still harping on the same string, namely making incessant appeals for money, has been ill in bed, asking for proofs of his play ('An Ideal Husband'), etc. . . . 17s. 6d."

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ROBERT HARBOROUGH SHERARD.

Vernon (Eure), France, March 7, 1905.

G. P. O.

OSCAR WILDE'S BOOK.

Sir,—My object in publishing "De Profundis" was in order to satisfy what I believed to be legitimate curiosity on the part of those who admired the late Mr. Oscar Wilde as a distinguished dramatist and man of letters. As I expressed in the short preface, I ventured to hope it would give many people a rather different view of the author. These hopes have been partly realised. It is an old platitude that every man has many sides to his character, some of them quite unknown to intimate friends. Even Mr. Oscar Wilde was no exception to the rule. But I do not think his consciousness at a particular moment is a matter for discussion in public. It was in fulfilment of an old promise that I brought a priest to his death-bed. On two former occasions he had contemplated being received—once as a young man, and again on his release from Reading. If Father Cuthbert Dunn, of the Passionists, was perfectly satisfied, I think your Catholic correspondent may feel reassured. This does not prevent "A" from holding to his own view because, as he says, not being a Catholic, an act of faith and what constitutes an act of faith cannot have much meaning for him. He was not present at the time, and it is hardly worth arguing about a matter of opinion.

With regard to the challenge of Mr. Anthony Collins as to whether "De Profundis" was written in prison, I can only refer him to the preface and to my publishers, Messrs. Methuen. It seems I can add nothing to his knowledge of prisons. I may venture to ask what evidence he can produce that he ever formed part of a "brilliant circle" in the early eighties. The name of Collins is unfamiliar to me, but the answer to my question can be left to the twenty-first century as far as it concerns

G. P. O.

OSCAR WILDE

Sir,—Permit me to say that Oscar Wilde towards the end repeatedly expressed a desire to a friend to be received into the Catholic Church. The friend in question advised him to wait, and Oscar Wilde called him "the cherub with the flaming sword, forbidding my entrance into Eden." I appreciate the difficulty in which that friend found himself under circumstances I need not go into, and exonerate him from blame. In the end the priest was sent for, but by the time he arrived Oscar Wilde, though conscious, was unable to move or speak, but he gave a sign, and in view of the fact that he had earnestly when in full consciousness repeatedly asked to see a priest with the object of becoming a Catholic, he was conditionally baptised, absolved, and anointed. R.I.P.

SACERDOS.

Mr. Oscar Wilde's "De Profundis."

"If," wrote Mr. Oscar Wilde during the last months of his incarceration, "I can produce only one beautiful work of art, I shall be able to rob malice of its venom and cowardice of its sneer, and to pluck out the tongue of scorn by the root." In one sense he was never permitted to gratify his wish, for that sombre and passionate poem of his, the "Ballad of Reading Gaol," though composed after the two years of his prison-martyrdom were ended, is plainly not the sort of art which he had in contemplation, and, save in this instance, his inspiration appears to have left him upon his release, mental collapse providing the truly piteous conclusion of his tragic career. But what he was not destined to accomplish when made free once more of the sunshine and the flowers and the glory of earth and sea, he had already completed while still in bonds. Not even the sordid monotony and humiliations of prison-life, though for a while they "turned" his "heart to stone," could destroy at once his wit, his grace of style, his ardour for self-expression, and within his narrow, dim-lit cell he fashioned—with what desperate travail may be imagined—a book wrung out of the very anguish of his soul, and therefore but too fittingly entitled by its editor, Mr. Robert Ross, "*De Profundis*," of which the least that can be said is that it is supremely beautiful—beautiful always in the rare felicity of its phrasing and the sincerity of its emotion, and often in the exaltation of its thought. The malice and sneers and scorn which hurt Oscar Wilde more than all his shame and punishment are dead long ago, and if they survived would be dumb before the gentle spirit of submissiveness which breathes through his words.

Other thoughtful men on both sides for some minds of moderate men on both sides gradually prepare the Land Purchase Act may gradually prepare the own. Further legislation on the lines of the Irish Parliament, with an army or navy of its the opposite extreme for an absolutely independent old lines. Hard, unrelenting coercion on the one hand and as far as is the extravagant claim as the excesses of ever solving the Irish difficulty on the other. There has been the same in both cases—namely, the hope-lessness produced by the speeches and the letters must have been the same in both cases—namely, the hope-lessness of ever solving the Irish difficulty on the one hand and as far as is the extravagant claim as the excesses of ever solving the Irish difficulty on the other. There has been the same in both cases—namely, the hope-lessness produced by the speeches and the letters must have been the same in both cases—namely, the hope-lessness of ever solving the Irish difficulty on the one hand and as far as is the extravagant claim as the excesses of ever solving the Irish difficulty on the other.

The only error of calculation which Mr. Wyndham made was in placing too much reliance on the influence of the moderate politicians in Ireland. They took too generous a view of human nature in supposing that the representatives of Ulster could forget at once the traditions of racial hostility that have so long divided that province from the rest of the country. Few men in the House of Commons were disposed to criticize, say, Mr. Craig or Mr. Sloan for the attitude they took up. Given this point of view and the position in which they are placed in Ireland politically, it was quite natural that they should view Sir Anthony's administrative experiments with misgiving and alarm. Precisely the same action would have to be taken by the Nationalists had the MacDonnell experiment tended in the direction of reaction rather than of conciliation. It is this intensity of view and strength of conviction on both sides which makes it so hard for the reformer to find a way out of the Irish difficulty. The debates in the early part of the week were followed very closely by English Unionists and English Liberals, and the impressions produced by the speeches and the letters must have been the same in both cases—namely, the hope-lessness of ever solving the Irish difficulty on the one hand and as far as is the extravagant claim as the excesses of ever solving the Irish difficulty on the other.

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passed between Sir Anthony MacDonnell and Mr.
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When the history of Ireland's struggle for self-
shape in the form of conciliatory administration.
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But it is curious how the self-consciousness of the artist is always intruding on these aspirations. It would be unfair to say that all the while the imprisoned man is thinking less of the beautiful life he means to lead than of the beautiful art which is to express that life; but certainly he can scarcely think of his life save as asserting itself in art. Even in these very confessions, worthy to stand beside those of Rousseau, we find that the mere reading of the four Gospels compels Oscar Wilde to set about inventing for himself a portrait of Christ. It is a portrait as fascinating as it is fantastic—a Christ who is the "precursor of the romantic movement in life," who is with the poets and was the first individualist in history, whose whole life was a poem and an idyll and a continual battle against the stupidity of the Philistines, whose morality was all sympathy, whose justice was all poetic justice, whose pardon was granted sinners for one beautiful moment in their lives—

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A paradox-monger, it will be seen, Oscar Wilde remained to the last, and yet, as the final sentence just quoted proves, a master of exquisite phrases and thoughts. An inveterate lover of beauty, but above all a lover of the beauty of language, who had all the actor's instinct for the appropriate speech of the moment, who even in this ultimate revelation of his soul must make his exit on what he thought the correct note of "a return to Nature." "Society," he remarks, in the concluding words of this book, "will have no place for me, has none to offer," but

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Herr Kayssler is one of the most promising of Berlin's younger actors. He made a considerable success as Iokanaan.

Photograph by Hertwig.

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Sir,—With the exception of his two sons, who, at the time of his death, were not of an age to know the circumstances attending it, the late Mr. Oscar Wilde was survived by no near relatives. But my first husband was his elder brother ; my little daughter bears his name ; and I should like, if you will allow me, to state how very distasteful the correspondence which has lately appeared in your columns is to me and many others. And this is not only for our own sake, but for that of my poor brother-in-law's memory. Nothing could have horrified him more than that men calling themselves his friends should publish concerning his latter days details so disgusting as those appearing in your issue of yesterday, or dispute over any change in his religion to which he may have assented on his death-bed.

During these latter days, he had a settled income from his wife's estate enough to provide him with the necessities of life. His temperament was such that he attached a greater value to its luxuries ; and this, I think, explains that often he found it difficult to provide himself with ordinary comforts. But he would have been the last to wish that letters should be written to the papers concerning these matters or his personal debts, all of which will be paid off in time, in the ordinary course of events, from the royalties still accruing from his plays and other works.

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Sir,—Will you allow one of your readers to express a hope that we have now heard the last of Oscar Wilde's last days in Paris? They do not make for edification. The events about which your correspondents are quarrelling do not affect the author's style or the value of his literary work, and it is surprising to me that his friends should wish to "wake" him in the Press. I cannot understand why "A" should think it so important that Wilde made no profession of faith, or that "O" should wish to persuade "A" that he did. If the subject, however, is to be continued, it would be more entertaining to learn why Wilde took the extraordinary action against Lord Queensberry. Under whose advice did he take the proceedings? Was he sober at the time? Was "A" there? Who was responsible for urging him to such a fatal step, more serious even than becoming a Roman Catholic?

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Z.

(Robert Ross)

THE WORLD OF BOOKS.

Mr. Oscar Wilde's "De Profundis."

"If," wrote Mr. Oscar Wilde during the last months of his incarceration, "I can produce only one beautiful work of art, I shall be able to rob malice of its venom and cowardice of its sneer, and to pluck out the tongue of scorn by the root." In one sense he was never permitted to gratify his wish, for that sombre and passionate poem of his, the "Ballad of Reading Gaol," though composed after the two years of his prison-martyrdom were ended, is plainly not the sort of art which he had in contemplation, and, save in this instance, his inspiration appears to have left him upon his release, mental collapse providing the truly piteous conclusion of his tragic career. But what he was not destined to accomplish when made free once more of the sunshine and the flowers and the glory of earth and sea, he had already completed while still in bonds. Not even the sordid monotony and humiliations of prison-life, though for a while they "turned" his "heart to stone," could destroy at once his wit, his grace of style, his ardour for self-expression, and within his narrow, dim-lit cell he fashioned—with what desperate travail may be imagined—a book wrung out of the very anguish of his soul, and therefore but too fittingly entitled by its editor, Mr. Robert Ross, "De Profundis," of which the least that can be said is that it is supremely beautiful—beautiful always in the rare felicity of its phrasing and the sincerity of its emotion, and often in the exaltation of its thought. The malice and sneers and scorn which hurt Oscar Wilde more than all his shame and punishment are dead long ago, and if they survived would be dumb before the gentle spirit of submissiveness which breathes through his posthumous and just published work (Methuen, 6s.). But, from the first, far more prevailing sentiments over his fate were compassion and regret—compassion over the ruin of a life so full of promise, regret for the loss of a dramatist who might have proved a second Sheridan for our stage. It is with such feelings that all right-minded readers will approach a volume containing his last recorded thoughts—these and a very natural curiosity. How, they will ask, did his imprisonment affect his pleasure-loving temperament, and did it really result in definite spiritual development?

To these questions it may be answered that the words most constantly employed in the first half of Mr. Oscar Wilde's "De Profundis" are sorrow and humility. In his old days, he confesses, he had kept deliberately to the sunny side of life's garden and shunned the shadow and gloom which are the other half of existence. He had to learn that "sorrow, being the supreme emotion of which man is capable, is at once the type and the test of all great art." On his own former conduct he passes no half-hearted condemnation:

The gods had given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. I amused myself with being a flaneur, a dandy, a man of fashion. I surrounded myself with the smaller natures and the meaner minds. . . . Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensation. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion. Desire at the end was a malady, of a madness, or both. . . . I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes a character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber, one has some day to cry aloud on the housetop. I ceased to be lord over myself. . . . I ended in horrible disgrace. There is only one thing for me now, absolute humility.

A different Oscar Wilde, this, obviously from the decadent poet who wrote—

Surely there was a time I might have trod
The sun-lit heights, and from life's dissonance
Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God!
Is that time dead? Lo! with a little rod
I did but touch the honey of romance—
And must I lose a soul's inheritance?

He is a man who is pathetically grateful to a friend who raised his hat to him in the prison corridor, who bears no resentment against the cruel crowd which mocked him for half an hour as he stood in convict dress on Clapham Junction platform and endured a veritable crucifixion of the spirit. He is quite assured that "love of some kind is the only possible explanation of the extraordinary amount of suffering that there is in the world":

I am convinced that if the world has indeed been built of sorrow, it has been built by the hands of love; because in no other way would the soul of man, for whom the world was made, reach the full stature of his perfection.

And then he adds a perfectly characteristic touch:

Pleasure for the beautiful body, but pain for the beautiful soul.

For the old Oscar Wilde was not extinct. His new-born humility could not eradicate that rather engaging vanity of his. He talks of himself as a "lord of language," which he certainly was, and as "a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture of his age," as he certainly did not. Nor would the author of "Dorian Grey" allow himself to be accused of inconsistency; he still continues the paradoxical antinomianism, the non-moral neutrality of his "Intentions." Thus:

I don't regret for a single moment having lived for pleasure. I did it to the full, as one should do everything that one does. But to have continued the same life would have been wrong, because it would have been limiting.

I need not tell you that reformations in morals are as meaningless and vulgar as Reformations in theology. But while to propose to be a better man is a piece of unscientific cant, to become a deeper man is the privilege of those who have suffered. And such I think I have become.

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

But whether a pose or not, this attitude is absolutely sincere—it is all of a piece. Alike of his sins and of his punishment, Mr. Wilde asserts that "to regret one's own experiences is to arrest one's own development." Here, then, was to be his future task—to explore his new-found world of sorrow, to turn it to account in the ethical evolution of his character:

I have got to make everything that has happened to me good for me. The plank bed, the loathsome food, the hard ropes shredded into . . . finger-tips grow dull with pain, the mental onces 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 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.

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"DE PROFUNDIS."

MR. ROBERT ROSS AND THE
SUPPRESSED PORTIONS.

Whilst there is no intention of opening in the columns of the "Evening Standard and St. James's Gazette" a correspondence on the subject of Mr. Oscar Wilde's "De Profundis," which has given rise to so much controversy, certain statements which Mr. Robert Ross, the editor of the work, made to our representative may interest our readers.

"My object," he said, "in publishing the book, as I have indicated in the preface and in my letter to the 'St. James's Gazette,' was that Mr. Oscar Wilde might come to be regarded as a factor in English literature along with his distinguished contemporaries. The success of 'De Profundis' and the reviews lead me to believe that my object has been achieved."

"I cannot expect the world to share my admiration of Mr. Oscar Wilde as a man of letters, at present, although that admiration is already shared by many distinguished men of letters in England, by the whole of Germany, and by a considerable portion of the literary class in France."

"With regard to the authenticity of the manuscript, I may say that it was well known that during his incarceration at Reading Gaol he was granted the privileges of pen and paper, only permitted in exceptional cases, at the instance of influential people not his personal friends. The manuscript of 'De Profundis,' about which he wrote to me very often during the last months of his imprisonment, was handed to me on the day of his release. The letters he had written to me in reference to it are published in the German edition of the work, and later on, perhaps, they may appear in England if I think it desirable to publish them here."

"Contrary to general belief the manuscript contains nothing of a scandalous nature, and if there was another object in publishing the work it was to remove that false impression which had gained ground. The portions which I have omitted in the English publication, apart from the letters to which I have already referred as appearing in the German edition, are all of a private character. There are one or two unimportant passages which the English publisher—very wisely, I think—deemed unsuitable for immediate reproduction in England?"

"In Germany Mr. Oscar Wilde's place in English literature has already been accepted. 'Salome,' for instance, is now part of the repertoire, and Strauss, the great musician, is engaged on an opera based on Mr. Wilde's work, which he selected out of many others because of its popularity in Germany, and also, no doubt, on account of the dramatic intensity of Mr. Wilde's interpretation of the Biblical story."

"It is not for me to criticise or to appreciate 'De Profundis' on which many competent writers have given their opinions, but I should have imagined that it was sufficiently clear that Mr. Oscar Wilde had not attempted to throw any blame for his misfortunes on any one but himself."

"The manuscript is written on blue prison foolscap. There are a few corrections. Although Mr. Wilde gave me very full instructions with regard to those portions which he wished published he allowed me absolute discretion in the matter, which he did about all his other manuscript and letters."

OSCAR WILDE'S WORKS.

Keen Demand By Collectors.

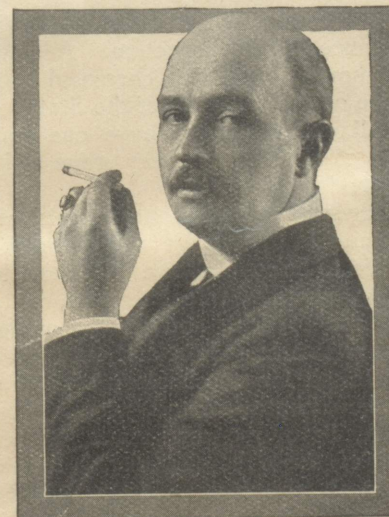
An inevitable result of the publication of "De Profundis" and the consequent re-awakening of interest in the author's personality, is the great demand for complete copies of Oscar Wilde's works. Second-hand booksellers have the field to themselves, as for various reasons, it appears that no publisher is likely to issue a reasonably-priced edition of Wilde's novels, poems, and plays.

Meanwhile it is instructive to note the sums demanded for first editions of the more important of his productions. Booksellers are charging five guineas for a copy of "Dorian Grey," while one guinea less is asked for "The Happy Prince and Other Stories." In 1878 Wilde carried off the Newdigate Prize at Oxford with a poem entitled "Ravenna," which was subsequently published at a shilling. A few copies are still in existence, but instead of a shilling they cost from five to eight guineas each.

There is also keen competition among collectors to secure magazines containing contributions by this author. Copies of "The Spirit Lamp" and "The Chameleon," monthly magazines issued during the early nineties, have increased in value from a shilling to three, and even, four guineas.

Oscar Wilde's plays are not so expensive. Messrs. French have published eighteenpenny editions of "The Importance of Being Earnest" and "Lady Windermere's Fan." There was an edition *de luxe* of the former issued in 1899 at a guinea which can now be obtained for about thirty shillings. His other plays, "An Ideal Husband" and "A Woman of No Importance," do not appear to have been published.

In France and Germany Oscar Wilde is looked upon as one of the masters of literature, and his works have a great sale, notably "Salome." So far this religious drama has not been seen in London, but next month two performances will be given by private subscription.



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St James
Gazette

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"I cannot expect the world to share my admiration of Mr. Oscar Wilde as a man of letters, at present, although that admiration is already shared by many distinguished men of letters in England, by the whole of Germany, and by a considerable portion of the literary class in France."

"With regard to the authenticity of the manuscript, I may say that it was well known that during his incarceration at Reading Gaol he was granted the privileges of pen and paper, only permitted in exceptional cases, at the instance of influential people not his personal friends. The manuscript of 'De Profundis,' about which he wrote to me very often during the last months of his imprisonment, was handed to me on the day of his release. The letters he had written to me in reference to it are published in the German edition of the work, and later on, perhaps, they may appear in England if I think it desirable to publish them here."

"Contrary to general belief the manuscript contains nothing of a scandalous nature, and if there was another object in publishing the work it was to remove that false impression which had gained ground. The portions which I have omitted in the English publication, apart from the letters to which I have already referred as appearing in the German edition, are all of a private character. There are one or two unimportant passages which the English publisher—very wisely, I think—deemed unsuitable for immediate reproduction in England?"

"In Germany Mr. Oscar Wilde's place in English literature has already been accepted. 'Salome,' for instance, is now part of the repertoire, and Strauss, the great musician, is engaged on an opera based on Mr. Wilde's work, which he selected out of many others because of its popularity in Germany, and also, no doubt, on account of the dramatic intensity of Mr. Wilde's interpretation of the Biblical story."

"It is not for me to criticise or to appreciate 'De Profundis' on which many competent writers have given their opinions, but I should have imagined that it was sufficiently clear that Mr. Oscar Wilde had not attempted to throw any blame for his misfortunes on any one but himself."

"The manuscript is written on blue prison foolscap. There are a few corrections. Although Mr. Wilde gave me very full instructions with regard to those portions which he wished published he allowed me absolute discretion in the matter, which he did about all his other manuscript and letters."

OSCAR WILDE'S WORKS.

April 1905

Keen Demand By Collectors.

An inevitable result of the publication of "De Profundis" and the consequent re-awakening of interest in the author's personality, is the great demand for complete copies of Oscar Wilde's works. Second-hand booksellers have the field to themselves, as for various reasons, it appears that no publisher is likely to issue a reasonably-priced edition of Wilde's novels, poems, and plays.

Meanwhile it is instructive to note the sums demanded for first editions of the more important of his productions. Booksellers are charging five guineas for a copy of "Dorian Grey," while one guinea less is asked for "The Happy Prince and Other Stories." In 1878 Wilde carried off the Newdigate Prize at Oxford with a poem entitled "Ravenna," which was subsequently published at a shilling. A few copies are still in existence, but instead of a shilling they cost from five to eight guineas each.

There is also keen competition among collectors to secure magazines containing contributions by this author. Copies of "The Spirit Lamp" and "The Chamelion," monthly magazines issued during the early nineties, have increased in value from a shilling to three, and even, four guineas.

Oscar Wilde's plays are not so expensive. Messrs. French have published eighteenpenny editions of "The Importance of Being Earnest" and "Lady Windermere's Fan." There was an edition *de luxe* of the former issued in 1899 at a guinea which can now be obtained for about thirty shillings. His other plays, "An Ideal Husband" and "A Woman of No Importance," do not appear to have been published.

In France and Germany Oscar Wilde is looked upon as one of the masters of literature, and his works have a great sale, notably "Salome." So far this religious drama has 2016-18-19 Women's University Library 33
two performances will be given by private subscription.



Jessen Women's University Library
2019-07-18
MR. ROBERT ROSS.

OSCAR WILDE'S LAST YEARS IN PARIS.—II.

The French possess the faculty, very rare in England, of differentiating between a man and his work. They are utterly incapable of judging literary work by the moral character of its author. I have never yet met a Frenchman who was able to comprehend the attitude of the English public towards Oscar Wilde after his release from prison. They were completely mystified by it. An eminent French man of letters said to me one day: "You have a man of genius, he commits crimes, you put him in prison, you destroy his whole life, you take away his fortune, you ruin his health, you kill his mother, his wife, and his brother (*sic*), you refuse to speak to him, you exile him from your country. That is very severe. In France we should never so treat a man of genius, but *enfin ça peut se comprendre*. But not content with that, you taboo his books and his plays, which before you enjoyed and admired, and *pour comble de tout* you are very angry if he goes into a restaurant and orders himself some dinner. *Il faut pourtant qu'il mange ce pauvre homme!*" If I had been representing the British public in an official capacity I should have probably given expression to its views and furnished a sufficient repartee to my voluble French friend by replying: "*Je n'en vois pas la nécessité.*"

Fortunately for Oscar Wilde, the French took another view of the attitude to adopt towards a man who has offended against society, and who has been punished for it. Never by a word or a hint did they show that they remembered that offence, which, in their view, had been atoned for and wiped out. Oscar Wilde remained for them always *un grand homme, un maître*, a distinguished man, to be treated with deference and respect and, because he had suffered much, with sympathy. It says a great deal for the innate courtesy and chivalry of the French character that a man in Oscar Wilde's position, as well known by sight, as he once remarked to me, as the Eiffel Tower, should have been able to go freely about in theatres, restaurants, and cafés without encountering any kind of hostility or even impertinent curiosity.

It was this benevolent attitude of Paris towards him that enabled him to live and, in a fashion, to enjoy life. His audience was sadly reduced and precarious, and except on some few occasions it was of inferior intellectual calibre; but still he had an audience, and an audience to him was everything. Nor was he altogether deprived of the society of men of his own class and value. Many of the most brilliant young writers in France were proud to sit at his feet and enjoy his brilliant conversation, chief among whom I may mention that accomplished critic and essayist, Monsieur Ernest Lajeunesse, who is the author of what is perhaps the best posthumous notice of him that has been published in France in that excellent magazine, the "*Revue Blanche*"; among older men who kept up their friendship with him, Octave Mirbeau, Moréas, Paul Fort, Henri Bauer, and Jean Lorrain may be mentioned.

In contrast to this attitude taken up towards him by so many distinguished and eminent men, I cannot refrain from recalling the attitude adopted by the general run of English-speaking residents in Paris. For the credit of my country I am glad to be able to put them down mostly as Americans, or at any rate so Americanised by the constant absorption of "American drinks" as to be indistinguishable from the genuine article. These gentlemen "guessed they didn't want Oscar Wilde to be sitting around" in the bars where they were in the habit of shedding the light of their presence, and from one of these establishments Oscar Wilde was requested by the proprietor to withdraw at the instance of one of our "American cousins" who is now serving a term of two years' penal servitude for holding up and robbing a bank!

Oscar Wilde, to do him justice, bore this sort of rebuff with astonishing good temper and sweetness. His sense of humour and his invincible self-esteem kept him from brooding over what to another man might have appeared intolerable, and he certainly possessed the philosophical temperament to a greater extent than any other man I have ever come across. Every now and then one or other of the very few faithful English friends left to him would turn up in Paris and take him to dinner at one of the best restaurants, and anyone who met him on one of these occasions would have found it difficult to believe that he had ever passed through such awful experiences. Whether he was expounding some theory, grave or fantastic, embroidering it the while with flashes of impromptu wit or deepening it with extraordinary and intimate learning (for, as Ernest Lajeunesse says, *he knew everything*), or whether he was "keeping the table in a roar" with his delightfully whimsical humour, summer-lightning that flashed and hurt no one, he was equally admirable. To have lived in his lifetime and not to have heard him

continued behind previous page

By Alfred Dreyfus

Continued behind

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He did not wear his scarlet coat,
For blood and wine are red.

"Well, what could I do," said Oscar Wilde plaintively, "I couldn't very well say

He did not wear his azure coat,
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The last time I saw him was about three months before he died. I took him to dinner at the Grand Café. He was then perfectly well and in the highest spirits. All through dinner he kept me delighted and amused. Only afterwards, just before I left him, he became rather depressed. He actually told me that he didn't think he was going to live long; he had a presentiment, he said. I tried to turn it off into a joke, but he was quite serious. "Somehow," he said, "I don't think I shall live to see the new century." Then a long pause. "If another century began, and I was still alive, it would be really more than the English could stand." And so I left him, never to see him alive again.

Just before he died he came to, after a long period of unconsciousness, and said to a faithful friend who sat by his bedside, "I have had a dreadful dream; I dreamt that I dined with the dead." "My dear Oscar," replied his friend, "I am sure you were the life and soul of the party." "Really, you are sometimes very witty," replied Oscar Wilde, and I believe those are his last recorded words. The jest was admirable and in his own *genre*; it was prompted by ready wit and kindness, and because of it Oscar Wilde went off into his last unconscious phase, which lasted for twelve hours, with a smile on his lips. I cherish a hope that it is also prophetic. Death would have no terrors for me if only I were sure of "dining with the dead."

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St. James Gazette. April 05

THE TRAGEDY OF A TEMPERAMENT.

"Oscar Wilde: The Story of an Unhappy Friendship." By Robert H. Sherard. (Greening, 5s. net.)

This book was privately printed in 1902, when, though it found its way into newspaper offices, circumstances prevented its being noticed. It is now issued to the public, in view presumably of the widespread interest roused by those remarkable confessions entitled "De Profundis," and of the consequent discussion of Wilde's temperament and tragedy.

Mr. Sherard was one of the last who came under the spell of the temperament; one of the two or three who did what in them lay to mitigate the horror of the tragedy. He writes himself down as an admiring worshipper. He appears to have been faithful to the end despite a period of estrangement between him and his idol in the days immediately before the wretched death in Paris. Judging also from the publication of the memoir in its present shape, neither "De Profundis" nor the world's comments thereon have shown him cause to modify his earlier impressions.

Others, however, with the sonorous phrases of "De Profundis" ringing in their ears, cannot avoid a comparison between the man who there laid bare his soul and the man of whom Mr. Sherard writes; between the man as self-portrayed and as pictured by his friend. On the one hand—in Wilde's own Wilde—is a character of eccentric brilliance, capable of heights of thought as well as language, somewhat of a philosopher, much of a genius. On the other hand—in Mr. Sherard's Wilde—is a wayward, self-indulgent, and rather silly child-man, a doll masquerading as a wit, a king of shreds and tatters huddling under borrowed purple and fine linen. The two impressions cannot be reconciled. It is easy to say that Mr. Sherard's friend was translated by the purification of suffering, into him of "De Profundis"; that agony put insight into a head which had previously mistaken wit for wisdom. No adequate explanation can be found in such a plea. When he wrote his book Mr. Sherard had had experience of both the proud and the humiliated Wilde, and, having seen him in his glory and his debasement, gives us no hint of the deeper springs which led to the fuller development.

It is not enough to say that he was "one of the brightest geniuses of the last century," and remained the "beau ideal of a gentleman in all that word implies of lofty and serene morality." The writer has not succeeded unless he has convinced the reader of the grounds of such praise. And conviction does not come of quoting flippancies as expressions

of belief, nor of declaring with much emphasis that the man was tolerant of enemies and uncomplaining under disaster. After "De Profundis" these things are superfluous. But Wilde wrote of himself as one who knew the subject—imperfectly yet intimately, as he who has had opportunities for finding his own soul does know. Mr. Sherard, we feel, never penetrated the secret of Wilde's personality: the temperament was and is a secret from him.

For the matter of that who can attempt to judge this curious human spectacle known as Oscar Wilde? The paradox in which it uttered itself was but the shadow of the paradox of its mental composition. Egoism has often been suggested as the key to the puzzle, and egoism is what men least understand. So little do they realise its potency that after some thousands of years' study Mr. Meredith's "Egoist" came upon the latest generation of students with the shock of a revelation. Sir Willoughby Patterne was one type of egoist. Thousands of other types are left for consideration, and the keynote has only just been set. How shall we comprehend an abnormal type like Oscar Wilde at a time when we are starting our A B C of the philosophy of egoism?

Much pious indignation has been bestowed on the lower animals who jeered and spat at the convicted wretch whilst he waited, chained and broadarrowed, on station platform. We should be the last to say it has been wasted. But there are two ways of regarding the effect of the insult upon its victim. Most men—which is as much as to say most egoists—would either have quailed and sunk under it or burnt themselves out in helpless wrath. Wilde remembered, and embalmed the remembrance in methodical tears as the anniversary of the torture came round. Was there not an element of pleasure in the suffering? Was it not better, in short, to be reviled of men than to pass unnoticed of men? Would-be experts in egoism may consider the point.

As we have already hinted, Mr. Sherard's book does not give much assistance in handling this or any other key to the puzzle. He shows the outer crust of Oscar Wilde; nothing else. More than this sin of omission are his sins of commission. At this time of day no good object can be served by reaping up the ingratitude and the cold cruelty of men and women who called Wilde friend. After all, they had more excuse than is to be discovered in most cases; and human nature is human nature even in artistic circles among the lovers of Beauty. The book would at least have been none the worse had names been suppressed in every instance. The story of Madame Bernhardt's diminution of sympathy may or may not be justified: certainly it should never have reappeared.

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OSCAR IN TWO EDITIONS.



THE AMERICAN.
(From a Photograph by Sarony, New York.)



FIN DE SIÈCLE—ENGLISH.
(From a Photograph by W. & J. D. Deane, Ebury-street.)

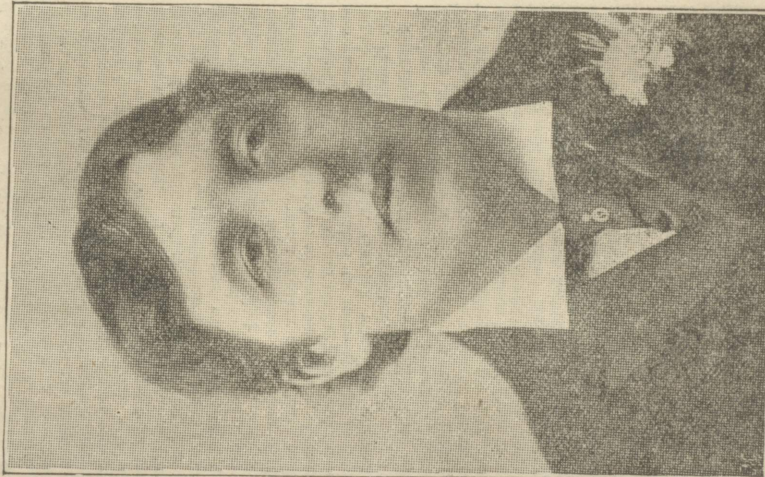
Westminster Budget March 10, 1893.

HAYMARKET THEATRE.

"AN IDEAL HUSBAND."

In "An Ideal Husband," with which Messrs. H. H. Morell and Lewis Waller have begun their temporary occupation of the Haymarket, Mr. Oscar Wilde has departed to some extent from his former method. He has sought in its four acts to tell a fairly serious story, and to enlist the sympathies of the public in fairly commonplace and respectable personages. No coruscation of flippancies, saucinesses, and impertinences, dazzles the eyes, no string of epigram and paradox is dangled in front of us. Epigram, paradox, and flippancy, witty, whimsical, or trivial rewarded the keen attention of the audience. These things, however, no longer constituted the play or buried the story. Mr. Wilde's theme is masculine iniquity, the manner in which Nemesis, though she wait long, in the end overtakes and clutches her victim. While secretary to a Cabinet Minister and still a youth, Sir Robert Chiltern has sold to a foreign financier a State secret, and has received for so doing the respectable *douceur* of some eighty odd thousand pounds, an amount which he has since—by, it is to be hoped, less reprehensible courses—trebled. At this moment Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, believed in and trusted by the people, and within easy reach of the highest honours, he hopes that this fault of youth has been forgotten. He should know better. Stage affluence and prosperity are, if possible, more illusive and transitory than those of real life. There is now some question of Argentine finance on which a Committee has been sitting, and it will be his duty to-morrow to rise in his place and denounce the whole thing as rotten and fraudulent. At this moment arrives Mrs. Cheveley, a lady with a dubious present and a still more dubious past. She is interested in the Argentine speculation, and she means to make Sir Robert, like a new

Balaam, bless those he set out to curse. She holds a trump card in the letter which he has been foolish



Mr. Oscar Wilde. (Photographed by Alfred Ellis, Upper Baker Street.)

enough to write concerning the fraud of his early career. Should she send this to the Press his career of power is at an end; the Chiltern thousands will not preserve him from the Chiltern Hundreds, and he will have to retire defeated and dishonoured to hide himself from his fellow-men. Indignation, protest, prayer, bribe are all powerless to move the astute and resolute lady. Ultimately he is compelled to consent. Very far from an ideal husband is it, will be seen, Sir Robert Chiltern. He is, however, the possessor of a wife who, from the standard of honour and purity, is almost more than ideal. So soon as she hears of the change of front she compels the poor poltroon to write and recall his promise. This is followed by a quarrel between the two women, at the close of which Lady Chiltern orders Mrs. Cheveley out of her house. An escape from this situation is due to Mrs. Cheveley's own carelessness, and to the cleverness of Lord Goring, who seeks to marry Sir Robert's pretty sister Mabel. Mrs. Cheveley has been foolish enough to lose a brooch which Lord Goring has been fortunate enough to find. In it he recognises a jewel which has once been in his possession, and which Mrs. Cheveley has purloined (!) As the price of secrecy concerning this larceny Lord Goring, who sails dangerously near the wind as regards compounding a felony, extorts the compromising letter of his future brother-in-law, which he burns. The enraged and defeated woman seeks vainly to involve Lord Goring and Lady Chiltern in an appearance of an intrigue, and has finally to retire defeated and beaten all along the line. Sir Robert, though fallen, in his wife's estimation, from his high estate, is forgiven by her. As the penalty for his early misdeeds and his subsequent pusillanimity, Sir Robert, with his wife's approval, declines the offer of a seat in the Cabinet brought him by the Earl of Caversham, Lord Goring's father. He is, however, induced to reconsider his refusal, and the piece ends with his complete rehabilitation. Not very conclusive is all this, and the action hinges on trifles, as in the comedy of Scribner and Sardon. Had Sir Robert written a discreet letter to his German associate he would have been in nobody's power. Had Mrs. Cheveley fastened on her jewellery more carefully, or lost it anywhere else, the ruin of the Foreign



THE AMERICAN.
(From a Photograph by Savory, New York.)



FIN DE SIÈCLE—ENGLISH.
(From a Photograph by W. & J. D. Downey, Ebury-street.)

HAYMARKET THEATRE.

"AN IDEAL HUSBAND."

In "An Ideal Husband," with which Messrs. H. H. Morell and Lewis Waller have begun their temporary occupation of the Haymarket, Mr. Oscar Wilde has departed to some extent from his former method. He has sought in its four acts to tell a fairly serious story, and to enlist the sympathies of the public in fairly commonplace and respectable personages. No coruscation of flippancies, saucinesses, and impertinences, dazzles the eyes, no string of epigram and paradox is dangled in front of us. Epigram, paradox, and flippancy, witty, whimsical, or trivial rewarded the keen attention of the audience. These things, however, no longer constituted the play or buried the story. Mr. Wilde's theme is masculine iniquity, the manner in which Nemesis, though she wait long, in the end overtakes and clutches her victim. While secretary to a Cabinet Minister and still a youth, Sir Robert Chiltern has sold to a foreign financier a State secret, and has received for so doing the respectable *douceur* of some eighty odd thousand pounds, an amount which he has since—by, it is to be hoped, less reprehensible courses—trebled. At this moment Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, believed in and trusted by the people, and within easy reach of the highest honours, he hopes that this fault of youth has been forgotten. He should know better. Stage affluence and prosperity are, if possible, more illusive and transitory than those of real life. There is now some question of Argentine finance on which a Committee has been sitting, and it will be his duty to-morrow to rise in his place and denounce the whole thing as rotten and fraudulent. At this moment arrives Mrs. Cheveley, a lady with a dubious past and a still more dubious past. She is interested in the Argentine speculation, and she means to make Sir Robert, like a new

Balaam, bless those he set out to curse. She holds a trump card in the letter which he has been foolish



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Mr. Oscar Wilde. (Photographed by Alfred Ellis, Upper Baker Street.)

enough to write concerning the fraud of his early career. Should she send this to the Press his career of power is at an end; the Chiltern thousands will not preserve him from the Chiltern Hundreds, and he will have to retire defeated and dishonoured to hide himself from his fellow-men. Indignation, protest, prayer, bribe are all powerless to move the astute and resolute lady. Ultimately he is compelled to consent. Very far from an ideal husband is, it will be seen, Sir Robert Chiltern. He is, however, the possessor of a wife who, from the standard of honour and purity, is almost more than ideal. So soon as she hears of the change of front she compels the poor poltroon to write and recall his promise. This is followed by a quarrel between the two women, at the close of which Lady Chiltern orders Mrs. Cheveley out of her house. An escape from this situation is due to Mrs. Cheveley's own carelessness, and to the cleverness of Lord Goring, who seeks to marry Sir Robert's pretty sister Mabel. Mrs. Cheveley has been foolish enough to lose a brooch which Lord Goring has been fortunate enough to find. In it he recognises a jewel which has once been in his possession, and which Mrs. Cheveley has purloined (!) As the price of secrecy concerning this larceny Lord Goring, who sails dangerously near the wind as regards compounding a felony, extorts the compromising letter of his future brother-in-law, which he burns. The enraged and defeated woman seeks vainly to involve Lord Goring and Lady Chiltern in an appearance of an intrigue, and has finally to retire discomfited and beaten all along the line. Sir Robert, though fallen, in his wife's estimation, from his high estate, is forgiven by her. As the penalty for his early misdeeds and his subsequent pusillanimity, Sir Robert, with his wife's approval, declines the offer of a seat in the Cabinet brought him by the Earl of Caversham, Lord Goring's father. He is, however, induced to reconsider his refusal, and the piece ends with his complete rehabilitation. Not very conclusive is all this, and the action hinges on trifles, as in the comedy of Scribe and Sardou. Had Sir Robert written a discreet letter to his German associate he would have been in no lady's power. Had Mrs. Cheveley fastened on her jewellery more carefully, or lost it anywhere else, the ruin of the Foreign



Photo by the Cameron Studio, Mortimer Street, W.
MRS. OSCAR WILDE.

the status of women writers has her earnest support. Finally—and this is the quality which commends her to editors—Miss Belloc knows what she can do, and does it.

Mrs. Oscar Wilde's somewhat shadowed personality is in many ways as interesting and complex as that of her gifted husband. Mrs. Wilde is a Londoner by birth and life-long associations. She lost her father, Mr. Horace Lloyd, a well-known barrister, when quite a child, and early developed artistic and literary tastes. Mr. Oscar Wilde's engagement to Miss Constance Lloyd took his friends by surprise, for he had always been considered a confirmed bachelor; but he and his twenty-year-old bride had many tastes in common, and their beautiful house in Chelsea has become the centre of an artistic *fin-de-siècle* society, for Mrs. Wilde possesses to a singular degree the art of forming a *salon*, and is a brilliant hostess. She never, however, allows any social pleasures or duties to interfere with the happiness or amusements of her two little sons, Vivian and Cyril, who are fortunate enough to find in their young mother the brightest of companions and dearest of playfellows.

Cynt



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stock of \$43,886,350 23 of the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati,
Chicago, and St. Louis Railway Company, and
through such ownership the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati,
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The above-mentioned letter of President Roberts
gives further particulars of the Pittsburgh, Cin-
cinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis Railway Company
and of its financial condition, as well as of the Con-
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The Bonds are not liable to be drawn or compul-
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Applications must be made on the accompanying
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The Allotment of the loan will be made as early as
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and if a portion of the amount applied for be al-
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May 19th, 1892.

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fund as in the bond provided, and also the payment
of the principal of the within bond, in like gold coin,
at the maturity thereof.

In witness whereof, the said Pennsylvania Com-
pany has hereunto affixed its corporate seal, and
caused the same to be attested by its Vice-President
and Secretary the day of A.D. 1892.

(Signed) JNO. E. DAVIDSON, Vice-President.

Attest: (Signed) S. B. LIGGETT, Secretary.

PENNSYLVANIA COMPANY,
Pittsburgh, Pa.
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that the consolidated mortgage may b
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free of taxes and maturing October 1st,
and interest payable in gold coin of the
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Yours truly,
(Signed) G. B. ROBERT
Pennsylvania Company and P. C. C.
Co.

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Mr Hawtrev
as
The Poet
(Mr O-r W-e)

Mr Brookfield as
The Prince of Denmark.
(Mr J. e)

Miss Venn
as
Ophelia



It is not generally known that Mr. Oscar Wilde's letter, advising Lord Alfred Douglas to visit Salisbury Cathedral and cool his hands in the "grey twilight of Gothic things," was so much admired by Pierre Loti that he turned it into a sonnet.

Louys

WILDE'S PROHIBITED PLAY.

It was a pity that "Salomé" was not allowed to rest—unacted. It is very enterprising of these innumerable dramatic clubs to steal round the Censor and to provide the dramatic critics with something to wile an evening away whenever there is no première at a legitimate theatre—but "Salomé," by Oscar Wilde, might well have been left alone.

In the first place, for amateurs to try to play such a piece is weak; to attempt to produce anything of the "atmosphere" of the time and land of Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Judæa, in a fusty little hall with a bandbox of a stage and scenery which literally defies description, is futile. But worse remains behind. The witchery, the languorous allurements of Salomé are imbedded in our consciousness by tradition. Her dancing exists in our imagination as something of grace almost beyond thought. Her beauty, the splendour of her are hallowed—although hallowed is, perhaps, not quite the right word—by the classics. Miss Constance Collier might approach our conception of her—but not of her dancing—if she were surrounded by the poetical magnificence of His Majesty's Theatre.

But Salomé at the Bijou Theatre, Bayswater, acted by a young lady of great intelligence, but with nothing of the physical or saltatory qualifications for the part—giving us a pas seul worthy of the Bijou Theatre, Bayswater—really, the time has come to protest. There is only one excuse for doing this sort of thing at all, and that is to do it well. It was quite unnecessary to perform "Salomé," and to perform it as it was performed at Bayswater last night is simply inept. And the stage-manager had not the acumen to arrange that her dance should be given out of sight of the audience. Then Herod's most obtrusive amorousness might have appeared less unreasonable.

In sober truth, "Salomé" is not fit for the English stage. It is not because of its Biblical figures, but because of the nastiness of the spirit and much of the language of the play. The music and fancy and allegory of the language—its imagery is sometimes remarkable, and the poetry of its prose undeniable—show the hand of a master, but the writing is often gross. It is sometimes so gross, so unnecessarily shameless, that, really, one shivers to hear men and women speak the words. One need not be a prude to feel this. In the study—yes; one can read it or leave it alone. But in a public place to hear it recited—it was painful.

Salomé seeks to seduce Iokanaan, the imprisoned Christian prophet, in the court of her step father, Herod the King. Because Iokanaan sends her from him, cursing her for her wickedness, she dances for Herod, and, as reward, claims the head of Iokanaan. Obtaining this, she fondles the ghastly face, which is brought to her on a silver dish, and kisses the lips denied her in life. It is simply horrible. This is the climax of the play. But previously we had been sickened by the most intimate recriminations between Herod and his wife, Herodias, and by the undisguised desires of the Tetrarch for his step-daughter. If this be the aim of "Independent" societies, if this be the drama of our emancipation, give us slavery, give us the regular theatre of milk-and-water, the cup-and-saucer comedy held up for our derision.

There is no necessity to give the names of the members of the New Stage Club interpreting this play. Clever and earnest as they were, there was no performance of sufficient power to warrant one breaking a silence which kindness alone dictates.

It is not generally known that Mr. Oscar Wilde's letter, advising Lord Alfred Douglas to visit Salisbury Cathedral, and cool his hands in the "grey twilight of Gothic things," was so much admired by Pierre Loti that he turned it into a sonnet.

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Louys

WILDE'S PROHIBITED PLAY.

It was a pity that "Salomé" was not allowed to rest—unacted. It is very enterprising of these innumerable dramatic clubs to steal round the Censor and to provide the dramatic critics with something to wile an evening away whenever there is no première at a legitimate theatre—but "Salomé," by Oscar Wilde, might well have been left alone.

In the first place, for amateurs to try to play such a piece is weak; to attempt to produce anything of the "atmosphere" of the time and land of Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Judæa, in a fusty little hall with a bandbox of a stage and scenery which literally defies description, is futile. But worse remains behind. The witchery, the languorous allurements of Salomé are imbedded in our consciousness by tradition. Her dancing exists in our imagination as something of grace almost beyond thought. Her beauty, the splendour of her are hallowed—although hallowed is, perhaps, not quite the right word—by the classics. Miss Constance Collier might approach our conception of her—but not of her dancing—if she were surrounded by the poetical magnificence of His Majesty's Theatre.

But Salomé at the Bijou Theatre, Bayswater, acted by a young lady of great intelligence, but with nothing of the physical or saltatory qualifications for the part—giving us a pas seul worthy of the Bijou Theatre, Bayswater—really, the time has come to protest. There is only one excuse for doing this sort of thing at all, and that is to do it well. It was quite unnecessary to perform "Salomé," and to perform it as it was performed at Bayswater last night is simply inept. And the stage-manager had not the acumen to arrange that her dance should be given out of sight of the audience. Then Herod's most obtrusive amorousness might have appeared less unreasonable.

In sober truth, "Salomé" is not fit for the English stage. It is not because of its Biblical figures, but because of the nastiness of the spirit and much of the language of the play. The music and fancy and allegory of the language—its imagery is sometimes remarkable, and the poetry of its prose undeniable—show the hand of a master, but the writing is often gross. It is sometimes so gross, so unnecessarily shameless, that, really, one shivers to hear men and women speak the words. One need not be a prude to feel this. In the study—yes; one can read it or leave it alone. But in a public place to hear it recited—it was painful.

Salomé seeks to seduce Iokanaan, the imprisoned Christian prophet, in the court of her step-father, Herod the King. Because Iokanaan sends her from him, cursing her for her wickedness, she dances for Herod, and, as reward, claims the head of Iokanaan. Obtaining this, she fondles the ghastly face, which is brought to her on a silver dish, and kisses the lips denied her in life. It is simply horrible. This is the climax of the play. But previously we had been sickened by the most intimate recriminations between Herod and his wife, Herodias, and by the undisguised desires of the Tetrarch for his step-daughter. If this be the aim of "Independent" societies, if this be the drama of our emancipation, give us slavery, give us the regular theatre of milk-and-water, the cup-and-saucer comedy held up for our derision.

There is no necessity to give the names of the members of the New Stage Club interpreting this play. Clever and energetic as they were, there was no performance of sufficient power to warrant one breaking a silence which kindness alone dictates.

Daily Progress
June 1892

Sir,—Mr. Mason's letter in your paper on Saturday last reminded me that I had given me some little time ago a copy of a play called "The Last of the Trelawny's," in which, I was told, Oscar Wilde had a hand. On looking this up to-night, I find that, curiously enough, it was first acted "in a private drawing-room in Dublin on the 1st May, 1875"—exactly 20 years ago. The play was printed at Dublin by Charles Chambers, 36, Dame-street, 1875, "at the request of friends—for private circulation only," the authors being named as Eldred Pottinger and Amaury Bouchier. "Captain Eldred Pottinger (late Royal Horse Artillery)" and "W. C. R. Wilde, Esq." are amongst the cast. Whether Amaury Bouchier is a real personage, or merely a name to cover the collaboration of the house party, which included Oscar Wilde, I cannot say.

RANDALL DAVIES.

Sir,—I am obliged to Mr. Stuart Mason for correcting the mistake which in my book on Mr. Oscar Wilde attributes to him the authorship of a translation of Barbey d'Aureville's "*Ce Qui Ne Meurt Pas*."

At the time when I wrote the incriminated passage I had received from the person who afterwards published this translation a letter, in which he informed me that Mr. Wilde had done this work for him. It seemed strange to me that my friend should have thus employed his pen, even in the service of a master so impeccable as Barbey; but one has seen Pegasus in the plough ere this; and then, again, Fate has such ironies that here too the unlikely was so unlikely as to appear true.

It needed but the perusal of the opening sentences of the first page of this translation to convince me that I had been wilfully deceived. It was then, however, too late to correct the mistake in my book, for this had been published. However, I made haste to expose the fraud, and that in no measured language.

Mr. Mason has rendered me a further and signal service. His explanation why this mistake was not corrected by me in the present edition of my book should clear me of the odious charge of opportunism which has been too freely levelled against me in connection with this re-issue.

ROBERT SHERARD.

Vernon, France, May 2.

G.P.O.

Dear Sir,—With reference to your article on above subject, I may mention that in the "Publisher and Bookseller" for April 29th is stated that booksellers are charging £5 5s. for a copy of "Dorian Gray," and for the Newdigate Prize poem of "Ravenna," published at 1s., £5 5s. and £8 8s. each. It does not say that anyone is fool enough to pay

these prices, but a copy sold at Sotheby's on July 7th last for 3s.

This is the full description—"Lot 649; Wilde (O.), *Ravenna*, Newdigate Prize Poem, recited at the Theatre, Oxford, June 26, 1878, in the original printed wrapper, Oxford, 1878."

Copies of "Dorian Gray" were recently sold as a remainder to the trade for 4s. each.

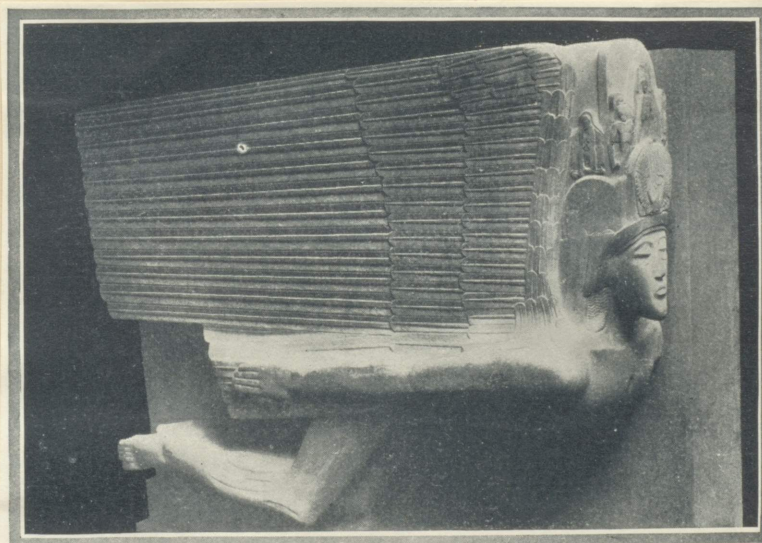
W. E. GOULDEN.

MODERN MYSTERIES OF FAMOUS PEOPLE.

FOR the last few weeks a strange story has been going the rounds of London literary circles. It is to the effect that Mr. Oscar Wilde is not dead—as is generally supposed—but has entered a religious order under the name of Brother Sebastian. It is affirmed that the report of the death and burial of the famous and unhappy writer was intended as a blind—that Mr. Wilde, weary of life, had resolved to be as one dead to the outside world, and, previous to hiding his identity under the cowl of a monk, had prevailed upon a few trusted friends to carry out a mock funeral.

Oscar Wilde is not the first celebrity upon whom some such story has been founded.

There is, for instance, the case of Charles Stewart Parnell, Irish leader. He died at Brighton on October 6th, 1891, and was buried in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin. There is no doubt that yet many of the more ignorant and uneducated of Ireland will not believe that he is dead. During the



Oscar Wilde's Much-discussed Tomb

Which has been quietly unveiled in a Paris cemetery

Prices of Oscar Wilde's Works.

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DEAD OR ALIVE?

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There is, for instance, the case of Charles Stewart Parnell, Irish leader. He died at Brighton on October 6th, 1891, and was buried in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin. There is no doubt that this report was intended to mislead the ignorant and the credulous. The people of Ireland will not believe in such a thing. During the