

## Entre Nous.

### Our Jubilee Number.

Next month this magazine celebrates its Jubilee in a special enlarged number (price 10d. as usual). Professor A. J. Gossip has written an account of his friend, Dr. James Hastings, the first editor, and the Very Rev. James Harvey has written of the Publishing House.

No one has a more comprehensive knowledge of the theological field of the last fifty years than Dr. A. E. Garvie, and he gives an interesting survey of it. Other contributors are the Bishop of Derby, the Bishop of Truro, Professor J. G. Riddell of Glasgow, and the Rev. William Barclay. The word 'To-day' will be the recurring note in their articles which deal with Faith in the Life of To-day, Religion in the Literature of To-day, Modern Thought in regard to Theology, Modern Thought in regard to the Evangelism of the Church.

A new series of articles on Constructive Theology, which will run through the coming year, will be begun in this number by Principal Vincent Taylor.

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### Muriel Lester.

Miss Lester has written a most easy and informal biography—*It Occurred to Me* (S.C.M. ; 7s. 6d. net). Indeed it rambles a little, although in a delightful way. For once, at least, the publisher's description of the book is correct—'It is a moving story of Christianity in action.'

'One day our train was held up for a minute or so on this part of the route. I stared down at the rabbit-warren of unsavoury dwelling-houses, gardenless, sordid, leaking. Being an innocent of some eight summers, I could not believe they were human habitations. I turned to the only grown-up, the nurse who was taking us home after a party. "Do people live down there?" I inquired, pointing. Perhaps she had orders not to let any of us become unhappy; I don't know. Her reply is clear-sounding in my ears still: "Oh yes. Plenty of people live down there, but you needn't worry about them. They don't mind it. They're not like you. They enjoy it."'

This was her first introduction to Bow.

At eighteen, she left St. Leonard's school, travelled on the Continent, and then came home to be a young lady at large, but she could not escape Bow. A friend asked her to go to a Factory

Girls' Club, and there she began to learn about home life in Bow. Not long after she and her sister Doris decided to live there. How to reach the masses? She had no doubt about the answer. It was to go and live with them.

'In a street like ours a peculiar sympathy is set up among people who suffer at the hands of the same landlord, who compare notes as to which inspector is most likely to insist on the landlord making the roof water-tight, and which of them might be meeting the said landlord for lunch. Also, to demonstrate on each other's walls rival methods of delousing creates a bond of helpfulness that lasts.'

After the foundation of Kingsley Hall she and her sister became gradually involved in many movements. She had been a Socialist for years, influenced in the early days by Mrs. Sidney Webb. She was a Pacifist, and took an active part in the Fellowship of Reconciliation. She was in the Women's Suffrage Movement, and we hear of Susan Lawrence, Maude Royden, and Mrs. Despard. Holiday schools, summer camps for children and for grown-ups, communal laundries, men's and women's adult schools, women's clubs—all have made their mark on the life of the people of Bow. In all these Muriel Lester played her part, and, as we know, it was no small part. Later on the story moves to India, China, and Japan, and we are concerned with class and colour distinctions, the drug trade and other evils.

One of the most suggestive chapters is on voluntary poverty. Various experiments were tried in the practice of voluntary poverty, so that neighbours might no longer live in compulsory want. 'Stephen and Rose [Hobhouse], some time after their marriage, diverted the whole of their income of £250 into channels of service to the community and entrusted its disposal to four of their friends.' 'Neighbours Ltd.' was founded. They kept only a small part of their income for their own use, the remainder going into a common fund for educational purposes. Miss Lester herself became one of 'the brethren of the common table.'

The interest of the volume is increased by a number of postscripts in which Miss Lester writes of present-day problems, of which she has special knowledge and which move her. One is the drug traffic in China (1938)—a terrible indictment of

the Japanese, but prefixed with 'it would not be seemly to make this report without reminding our readers of our bad British record as regards opium.'

#### Brethren of the Common Table.

'Soon a number of people, eager to see Christ manifested in the economic sphere, found a worthy leader in Bernard Walke, the rector of an old church in a remote village on the Cornish coast. He had been working out an idea of a brotherhood based on the economic significance of the communion table, where there is no specially favoured guest, no head or foot of the table, where Christ is the unseen Host of all who care to come. There is no lack or shortage, however many may partake. . . .

Half the world is sick, fat with excess :

The other half as that poor stranger passed us  
even now

Who thanked us for our crust with tears.

'Some dozen of us East Enders who held these views formed a Chapter at Bow under Bernard Walke's suggested title, *The Brethren of the Common Table*. We met once a month. We took no vows. We only promised to be honest and confess the measure of our greed and of our need. We found it the hardest thing we had ever done, so hard that we had to start with worship. Only through silent prayer during which we tried to think like God could we acquire the grace of straightforward, honest, direct statement. Among our number was an heiress or two, a curate, a writer, a teacher, a dog-biscuit packer, an out-of-work carpenter, a dock labourer, a young widow on relief, and a journeyman printer. We each had to own up in turn as to how much we had earned or received during the past month and exactly how we spent it. Those who had a surplus laid it on the table in front of us. Those who needed extra took it. It was *de rigueur* not to say "thank you," because we held that it was no longer the owner's property if he did not need it. Therefore it wasn't a gift, but the proper possession of the needy. We took as our slogan, "The only Christian, the only rational basis for the distribution of goods is need."

'The obvious thing happened to us. From very shame of confessing, one lowered one's weekly expenditure on self. . . .

'Probably the most important warning one can give is not to start with only middle-class people.

Such tend to become too meticulous. On several occasions we middle-class members were saved from finicky particularism by the rough-and-ready sanity of the working people. For instance, the curate, in reporting his budget one month, said, "And then I'm afraid I spent half-a-crown on a ticket for the Russian Ballet." The poorest woman present leaned forward and studied his face critically.

"Young man," she said, "why d'you say you're afraid you spent it?"

"Because I'm rather ashamed when there's such a shortage among the members," he answered.

"But didn't you enjoy the Ballet?" she persisted.

"Very much indeed," he said.

"Well," she retorted, "now you can tell us all about it, and we can enjoy it, too."<sup>1</sup>

#### The Stars Bow Down.

In *The Stars Bow Down*, by Gordon Daviot (Duckworth; 3s. net), a cold hard competence and brightness has cut and polished the ancient Bible tale, and given us a play well worth reading. This play was planned to have been produced upon the stage before Sir James Barrie's 'David,' but owing to difficulties in casting that became impossible. And a certain superficial resemblance between the characters of Barrie's young David and Gordon Daviot's young Joseph in *The Stars Bow Down* has, we believe, induced this modest author to postpone dramatic presentation lest in her own words she should have been accused of 'staggering with imitative gestures in the footsteps of genius.' But the author of 'Richard of Bordeaux' is a good playwright, and we hope that there may be better days before it than 'David' enjoyed in the brief weeks when the stars not only bowed down but came down.

Meanwhile it is worth reading if only to be turned from its bright almost eighteenth-century elegance and accomplished wit to the Sacred Page. That is to be turned from prose to poetry, from wit to feeling, from brilliance to grandeur, from man to God.

Sophistication has its own charm, but what does it forfeit? Something perhaps which can never more be native to great tracts of worship and faith, a primitive glory that faded with the dawn. Better perhaps that the modern writer of this type should make no attempt to imitate the antique beauty, but should as here study to recapture little ironies and frailties and sweetnesss that time and weariness

<sup>1</sup> M. Lester, *It Occurred to Me*, 90 f.

have not yet dimmed from the human page. There is therefore teaching value in this little play. It should reassure the secular mind of the historical and human worth of those old tales, and awaken then some deeper curiosity, which must find satisfaction elsewhere.

#### Kohila.

*Kohila* is the story of the shaping of a little Indian nurse—her training in truth, loyalty, and honour. It is the latest Dohnavur book written by Miss Amy Carmichael. It will be remembered that the Dohnavur Fellowship exists to save young children from a life of vice in the service of the temples. Those who have read Miss Carmichael's earlier books cannot forget her individual style, her delicate imagination and spirituality.

Kohila, Cuckoo in English, joined the family of about two hundred other children at Dohnavur when she was four. She found her place in the nurseries where there was much tenderness though no softness. From the very beginning the child's play was mixed with work. 'There were pots and pans to scrub and brass vessels to polish, and the ground round the nurseries to be swept with brooms made of grasses fastened together in an ingenious Indian way; and there were floors to wash.'

Nursery rhymes about the common things of homestead, field, and garden were made up on the spot and played their part in education. 'We tried to keep a difference between Sunday rhymes and Monday rhymes, but they sometimes overlapped:

The lizard runs along the ground and then runs up a tree,  
He turns his funny little head and then he looks at me,  
He wiggle-waggles up and down and then he looks at me,

chanted Kohila and her set with enthusiasm one Sunday morning, just as we were on our way to the village church, which in those days we attended. Visions of a shocked Pastor's face looking over the low mud wall that separated us from his backyard drew forth a mild remonstrance. "But look," was the instant, triumphant answer, "please look; the lizard's doing it; he's going on doing it!" So we were not too rigid. It would not grieve their Creator if we sang of what His sinless creatures did quite sinlessly on Sunday.'

One thing was felt clearly about the training of the children. It was that all influences should be

bent one way—training should not be perplexed by a mixture of thoughts, but expressed in a single line of conduct. After the child's life had rooted, let the winds blow as they will. Then they would only cause the roots to take a firmer grip.

From the nursery Kohila passed to the school, and then at the age of seventeen she began her training as a nurse. It was when she was given the responsibility of being in charge of a nursery with younger girls to train that a weakness in her character came to light. 'The alloy that was discovered in her gold was a weakness which leaned towards shielding a wrongdoer, or even sympathizing with her, rather than taking the harder way of love without dissimulation, the noblest kind of help that soul can offer soul, and by far the most costly. . . . But "Failure is only fatal when it drives us in upon ourselves"; and failure drove Kohila to the Christ of Calvary.'

From subtle love of softening things,  
From easy choices, weakenings,  
From all that dims Thy Calvary,  
O Lamb of God, deliver me.

Not long after there came a tragic day when Kohila, going with a friend up the mountain to gather a special purple flower for Another's Coming Day (the day on which the children came to the home was celebrated instead of their birthdays), fell from a rock and was killed. The friend who was with her wrote: 'She had such a deep love for everybody that I cannot remember her not loving anybody. . . . She never thought of putting herself first in any way. And everybody in trouble went to her. She was rather like King David when he was in the cave, and every one that was in distress and discontented gathered themselves unto him; for all who were like that went to her, and some became good through her influence.'

How is it possible for the S.P.C.K. to produce anything so attractive at 5s.? And, turning the pages over to the end, the reader has the delightful surprise of finding thirty-nine photographs of the children which Kohila and the other nurses cared for.

#### A Dohnavur Song.

There were two gardens in the land,  
And both lay on a hill,  
And one was called Gethsemane,  
The other was near Calvary;  
And both are with us still.

Lord, when we climb our Olivet,  
 Show us the garden there.  
 And teach us how to kneel with Thee  
 Beneath some ancient olive tree,  
 And learn to pray Thy prayer.

And when we climb the farther hill,  
 Where once the mighty Powers  
 Of hell defied Thee, lift our eyes  
 To where the peaceful garden lies,  
 That welcomed Thee with flowers.<sup>1</sup>

#### Social Gospel.

Writing in *Religion in Life* (Summer Number) Dr. Frederick C. Grant says: 'The religion of the New Testament does not stand alone. It does not burst upon the world all of a sudden, like some *nova* before the eyes of the astonished astronomer. . . . It was out of Judaism that Christianity was born; and the first witness of the Church was that it represented the New or the True Israel—in which all the promises and commandments of God were "Yea." . . . Judaism was a *church*, founded as a church, a religious society; it was not "as the nations round about." And the social idealism, the very social conceptions, that inform the prophets and influence the law, were still dominant in Jesus' world—first-century Jewish Palestine.

'To illustrate. The Book of Proverbs opens with an appeal to abstain from blood, to avoid the company of robbers—highwaymen!—who "lurk privily for the innocent" and "fill their houses with spoil"; for the end of these bandits is their own self-destruction. This is good advice—we are only surprised that it should seem necessary; though we recall that even in the *Mishneh Torah* of Maimonides, as late as the twelfth century, it is directed that no Jew is to sharpen the weapons of a Jewish robber! But this is not the whole point of the advice. The tremendous thrust comes later:

So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain;  
 It taketh away the life of the owners thereof

—both the original owners, and the freebooters who treat commerce as a rough-and-tumble game, and the devil take the losers. There is your social gospel, in the Bible of Jesus and His apostles, in a writing that does not reflect the law a hundred per cent, but certainly in this respect echoes the

<sup>1</sup> *Kohila*, 141.

humanitarian provisions of the sacred code. It is no tirade against "the profit motive," for without the profit motive there would be no commerce, no industry, no "civilized" life at all: a fact as patent as when Thucydides sketched the beginnings of the highest civilization he knew—that of Greece before the Civil War. We tend to ignore it; but then we have fallen into the habit of decrying the social order, without pausing to consider what sort of workable substitute we have to offer, were we suddenly called upon to take over human society and manage it, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and provide jobs for all. And note how the author goes to the roots of the problem in one phrase: "greedy of gain." There is the ethical—or unethical—source of our trouble. Not the profit motive, but the *uncontrolled* profit motive; the bland assumption that any one will do anything whatever for a consideration; and that whatever a man does may be excused, if we only recognize the factor of his own gain or advantage in what he does. That is the curse, not of "capitalism," but of *any* system—capitalist, socialist, or communist—in which "greed for gain" blots out all consideration of human welfare, the rights of the individual, and the well-being of the whole social group.'

#### Overcoming Difficulties.

Lady Cromer in her volume of reminiscences that has just been published—*Such Were These Years*<sup>1</sup>—was told by Lord Reading that 'a woman who had recently had a much-desired son had asked him for what she should pray most for her child. "What do you think my reply was?" he said. I guessed possibly "courage." "No," he replied; "ask difficulties for your boy." He agreed with me that it was an inhuman request and not one that he would make himself. He admitted that he would never have wished his own rough lot to have been that of his son's. To fall or to rise lie very close together, but, he added, "Overcoming difficulties will alone form character."

<sup>1</sup> P. 87.

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