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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

ONE of the least obtrusive but most significant features of our life since the War began is the number of new poets who have appeared. They have been especially numerous at the Universities. From Oxford and Cambridge alone there have passed through the reviewers' hands some fifty or sixty volumes within the present year.

They are the work, sometimes of men, sometimes of women, and there is much variety of treatment. But with all the variety two things are characteristic—reality and unconventionality. That is to say, there is a determination on the part of all these new poets to see with their own eyes, and then to express what they see in their own language. As one of them puts it :

I have been reading books
For about twenty years ;
I have laughed with other men's laughter,
Wept with their tears.

Life has been a cliché
All these years.

I would find a gesture of my own.

Listen to one of these poems. It has been published in Oxford by Mr. Blackwell in a volume entitled *Catholic Tales and Christian Songs*

(3s. net). The author is Dorothy Leigh SAYERS. It is startlingly unconventional ; but hear it to the end. Three verses will be enough :

Go, bitter Christ, grim Christ ! haul if Thou wilt
Thy bloody cross to Thine own bleak Calvary !
When did I bid Thee suffer for my guilt
To bind intolerable claims on me ?
I loathe Thy sacrifice ; I am sick of Thee,

I am battered and broken and weary and out of
heart,

I will not listen to talk of heroic things,
But be content to play some simple part,
Freed from preposterous, wild imaginings . . .
Men were not made to walk as priests and
kings.

O King, O Captain, wasted, wan with scourging.
Strong beyond speech and wonderful with woe,
Whither, relentless, wilt Thou still be urging
Thy maimed and halt that have not strength to
go? . . .

Peace, peace, I follow. Why must we love
Thee so?

Here is a confession of the fascination of Christ. The subject is not so often introduced to our attention as it might be. What is it? What is that gift or grace which some persons possess and

which we call attraction, fascination, charm? It is most frequently possessed by women; but we have noticed it attributed in their biographies to the following men, and the number could no doubt be increased—Stevenson, Rossetti (they are given in no order), Stanley, Francis, Gordon, Garibaldi, Newman, Drummond. We cannot tell what it is. Charm is as indefinable as poetry or personality. But we can name some of the elements that enter into it. There are three elements—Courage, Sympathy, and Selflessness—and Christ possessed them all.

First, *Courage*. We distinguish physical from moral courage, but Christ had both. It was physical courage that made Him resolve to return to the neighbourhood of Jerusalem when Lazarus died, although the Jews had threatened to stone Him. And it was physical courage that put into His hands the whip of small cords with which He drove the buyers and sellers out of the Temple.

But moral courage is better. In his new book on *The Father of a Soldier*, Dr. W. J. DAWSON, the Evangelist, says: 'I went to a theatre one night to hear Harry Lauder. His son, on whom all his hopes were set, had been killed in action a week or two earlier. He was absent from the stage for two nights; on the third he resumed his part, saying that he believed his son would have wished him to go on doing his bit. The part that he had to perform was the cruellest test of courage that could be imagined. The scene was set at the Horse Guards; a company of men in khaki marched past to the gay lilt of martial music; Lauder sang a song about the boys coming home. Conceive the situation: his own son lay dead, and he had to sing of the boys coming home! It seemed as if the management should have cut this song; every canon of decency demanded it. But the song was the best thing in the performance; to have omitted it would have deprived the public of a pleasure, and Lauder himself would not have agreed to its deletion, for it would not have been

"doing his bit." He sang it with every nerve drawn tense. His stern set face deeply lined, his trembling lips and stiff attitude, witnessed to the strain he suffered. But he sang it to the end without faltering, and left the stage amid the sympathetic silence of his audience. That silence was their tribute to one of the rarest acts of courage that the stage had ever witnessed.'

Christ had moral courage, greater than this. It was moral courage that enabled Him to set His face steadfastly and go up to Jerusalem for the last time, knowing what awaited Him. It was moral courage that made it possible for Him to say in the depth of the Agony in the Garden, 'Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.'

The next element is *Sympathy*. Now sympathy is made up of two things—love and suffering. There must be love. Matthew Arnold has a poem on Heine. There is praise in it for this and that; but—

But it was thou—I think
Surely it was!—that bard
Unnamed, who, Goethe said,
Had every other gift, but wanted love;
Love, without which the tongue
Even of angels sounds amiss?

Charm is the glory which makes
Song of the poet divine,
Love is the fountain of charm.

Yes, love is the fountain of charm. But there must be suffering also. The man who fascinates us and makes us his followers must be one who suffers with us and for us. It was this that drew men to Garibaldi. It is this that still draws men to Christ. 'Wan with scourging,' says our Oxford poet, 'wonderful with woe.' One of the apostles expresses it once for all: 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me'—a marvellous sentence, simple, comprehensive, conclusive.

But there is another element. It is *Selflessness*. This is perhaps the most striking thing about our soldiers. They have not considered themselves. We have called them heroes; they have never thought themselves heroic. 'It is all in the day's work,' they have said. We have already heard Dr. DAWSON, let us hear him again: 'A friend has just left my house whose boy has been home on his last leave before going overseas. He is only eighteen, and young for his age. He has been trying to enlist ever since his seventeenth birthday. He succeeded at last, and joined by choice a branch of the service which is generally regarded as the most dangerous. Speaking of him, his father said, "Of course he expects to die. They all do." The words were uttered calmly, as though they expressed a commonplace!' We do not often think of Christ in this connexion. But there is nothing that is more characteristic of Him than His selflessness. Listen to one strong statement of a follower: 'Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.'

These three elements then—Courage, Sympathy, Selflessness—are found in the fascination of Christ. They do not explain it entirely, but they help us to understand why men and women have felt it and have not been able to resist it.

But this Oxford poet resisted it. Why? Because she wanted to live an easy, quiet, unambitious life; and she knew that if she yielded to the fascination of Christ that would be impossible:

I am battered and broken and weary and out of heart,

I will not listen to talk of heroic things,
But be content to play some simple part,
Freed from preposterous, wild imaginings . . .
Men were not made to walk as priests and kings.

It is not that Christ demands restless energy from all His followers. On the contrary, He promises rest to those that are already restless and weary. But He does demand the pursuit of high aims and such self-sacrifice as may come in our way towards their attainment. 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.' 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' 'Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.'

And was He not wise in making this demand? 'A conversation took place between a great English statesman and Cavour. The Englishman said, "Why do you aim at anything so great as the unity of Italy? You can never reach it. Why not concentrate on something practicable, such as the reform of the Kingdom of Naples?" Cavour answered, "I cannot get the reform of Naples, because no one is ready to die for it; I can get the unity of Italy, because thousands of Italians are ready to die for it."'

We have been amazed at the way in which the men we know heard the call and went to unspeakable hardships and even death. We did not know it was in them. Why not? Because we had never tested them by the offer of a great cause. Some of them went for the sake of their king, some for the love of their country, and some for the welfare of the world.

Proudly they gathered, rank on rank, to war,
As who had heard God's message from afar.
All they had hoped for, all they had, they gave,
To save mankind; themselves they scorned to save.

This woman resisted the fascination of Christ. But she could not resist it always. She came too near to withstand it longer. You know Sir Isaac Newton's law of attraction. The force of attraction, he says, is in proportion to the greatness of

the power that attracts and its nearness to that which it is attracting. The power of Christ was too great for her. 'Strong beyond speech,' she calls Him. And she came too near.

What brought her near? No doubt it was her determination to reach reality. Seizing St. Mark's Gospel she would go aside, resolved to see for herself. 'What does the Gospel tell us that He actually did when He was on earth? What is the impression that He actually made upon those who lived with Him?'

If she was engaged in war work, in helping or in healing, that would bring her near. For He was Himself a healer and a helper. As soon as His ministry began He went straight to those who needed His help. St. Mark has not finished his first chapter before he has Him involved in Red Cross work from morning to night. And He encouraged others. St. Mark begins his second chapter with the story of the four men who carried the paralytic into His presence. How can any one who has ever had to do with suffering escape His fascination? He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. 'Peace, peace, I follow. Why must we love Thee so?'

The value of what is here called the Fascination of Christ has been brought out vividly by one of the most successful, and deservedly successful, religious teachers of our day, Mr. E. A. BURROUGHS.

Mr. BURROUGHS has published a book with the title of *The Faith of Friends* (Nisbet; 2s. net). He has discovered a contradiction in the lives of the men who have been at the front and are now coming home from it. 'There has been a strange disintegration of the individual. Part of him has consciously, visibly, grown and been glorified; other parts have fallen into a sort of decay. In

the soldier, especially, those sides of himself which the religion of Active Service has penetrated, have developed almost unbelievably, and produced a growth of romantic, old-world heroism in the second decade of this century which none of us would have believed possible in the first. The reign of discipline has, within the region covered by it, produced a revelation which has staggered even those in whom it appears. The none too steady driver of a rural steam-roller before the war, who, when a live bomb slipped and fell in his dug-out, stripped off his tunic, threw it over the bomb, and sat down on it, thereby winning ghastly wounds and the V.C., when asked by his friends at home what made him do it, could only answer that "he must have forgotten himself"—a saying far profounder than he knew.'

'But side by side with the revelation of latent good there has been the great outcrop of latent evil—sometimes in the same individual on the same day. The man who has saved a comrade's life in the morning, will, on occasion, steal his supper or blanket the same night; the officer who showed all the splendour of self-effacing leadership in the trenches yesterday may be among the unabashed frequenters of the house of vice in Béthune or Armentières to-day. And very likely neither he nor his friends nor his commanding officer regard the two things as inconsistent. The latter will, quite possibly, come down upon him heavily for minor neglect of his men's bodily comfort, and later encourage him to have "a good time"—at the expense of some woman's soul.'

How are we to account for this astounding contradiction? It is not difficult to account for it. The men are taken possession of by a cause which is great enough to make them render up their lives for it, but not religious enough to make them reverence their bodies and souls. They have fought for something which seemed to them worth fighting for. But it has been a secular thing. They have been fascinated by a world in which their own country shall be supremely great. Some-

times its expression has been 'Rule Britannia!' and sometimes something more. It has not, in these cases of divided personality, been a religious thing. The fascination has not been the fascination of Christ.

'What is needed,' says Mr. BURROUGHS, 'is to find and propagate a faith that will cover with its claim a man's whole life—one which, in its working, will resemble the Army religion, but, in its efficacy, will pervade and penetrate his inner as well as his official self.'

To the foregoing postscript add another.

In the book just referred to Mr. BURROUGHS has a good example, as we have seen, of what is meant by selflessness. The soldier who sat down on the bomb said he must have forgotten himself.

It is a good example. But it differs from the selflessness of Christ. He never forgot Himself. Of all those who have been seen on earth He alone was perfectly selfless. But, if we may use the phrase, He had always all His wits about Him. He knew what He did when He made Himself of no reputation. When He submitted unto death He knew that there were more than twelve legions of angels eager to snatch Him from it.

That is how it came to pass that selflessness in Christ coincided with the most unbounded assertion of self. For selflessness is not denial of one's personality, it is the offering of the personality for others' good. And the greater the personality the grander the offering.

Mr. BURROUGHS has not come to it in the way that we have come, but what he says is in harmony. 'God,' he says, 'is, in effect, Personality without "Self"—the only completely and naturally selfless Being in the universe. That is what we mean by saying that "God is Love." And yet He is also Personality at its fullest and best—Personality so far surpassing the range of our own that we

cannot speak of Him as "a Person," but only as "Three Persons in One God." And the greatness of His Personality is not in spite of, but because of, His selflessness. All of which is, of course, but a mysterious tangle of words, till we look at it in the light of our own experience of love; and then we seem at least to begin to understand both God and ourselves. "Love is from God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God."

'Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.' And ever since then the world has wondered, not why the young man kissed the maiden, but why he lifted up his voice and wept. It has been reserved for Sir J. G. FRAZER to furnish the explanation.

Sir J. G. FRAZER, the author of *The Golden Bough*, has just published three massive volumes on *Folk-lore in the Old Testament* (Macmillan; 37s. 6d. net). There was a time when the book would have been condemned to the flames, and the author would have been lucky to escape following it. We are men of milder manners. Perhaps also of easier consciences. For in nearly every prominent institution in the Old Testament, and in nearly every religious custom, Sir J. G. FRAZER finds traces of what he calls Folk-lore. And Folk-lore is just the survival into civilization of superstition and savagery.

But it is well for us, as it is well for Sir J. G. FRAZER, that we are living under better laws. Otherwise we might have missed the testimony which this strict inquisitor of tradition has to say about the higher side of the Old Testament. 'The annals of savagery and superstition,' he says, 'unhappily compose a large part of human literature; but in what other volume shall we find, side by side with that melancholy record, psalmists who poured forth their sweet and solemn strains of meditative piety in the solitude of the hills or in green pastures and beside still waters; prophets who lit up their beatific visions of a blissful future

with the glow of an impassioned imagination; historians who bequeathed to distant ages the scenes of a remote past embalmed for ever in the amber of a pellucid style? These are the true glories of the Old Testament and of Israel; these, we trust and believe, will live to delight and inspire mankind, when the crudities recorded alike in sacred and profane literature shall have been purged away in a nobler humanity of the future.'

There is something more in the Old Testament than even all that. But we come to the weeping of Jacob when he kissed Rachel. It belongs, says Sir J. G. FRAZER, to the lower side of ancient Hebrew life. It is a survival of savagery and superstition.

It is found in savage countries still, and over a large part of the earth. It is found, after kissing, or along with it, in New Zealand, in the Andaman Islands, in North and in South America. And wherever it is found it is a matter not of emotion, but of custom and convention.

That does not mean that it is a matter of no account. 'In New Zealand (Sir James FRAZER quotes from W. Yate, *An Account of New Zealand*, 1835), should a friend be going a short voyage to Port Jackson, or Van Dieman's Land, a great display of outward feeling is made: it commences with a kind of ogling glance, then a whimper, and an affectionate exclamation; then a tear begins to glisten in the eye; a wry face is drawn; then they will shuffle nearer to the individual, and at length cling round his neck. They then begin to cry outright, and to use the flint about the face and arms; and, at last, to roar most outrageously, and almost to smother with kisses, tears, and blood, the poor fellow who is anxious to escape all this.'

But it is not the expression of grief. The same writer says: 'There is much of the cant of affection in all this; for they can keep within a short distance of the person over whom they know they must weep, till they have prepared themselves by think-

ing, and have worked themselves up to the proper pitch; when, with a rush of pretended eagerness, they grasp their victim (for that is the best term to use), and commence at once to operate upon their own bodies, and upon his patience.' 'I spoke to them,' he says, 'about their hypocrisy, when they knew they did not care, so much as the value of a potato, whether they should ever see those persons again, over whom they had been crying. The answer I received was, "Ha! A New Zealander's love is all outside: it is in his eyes, and his mouth."''

Has it any meaning? Sir J. G. FRAZER believes that it has. That is why he brings it into his book. After he has spoken of various results to the person over whom the weeping takes place, results which may here be left unrecorded, he says: 'Disgusting as such forms of salutation may seem to us, it is not impossible that the application of all these exudations to the person of the stranger was not a mere accident, the effect of uncontrollable emotion, but that it may have been seriously intended to form a corporeal as well as a spiritual union with him by joining parts of their body to his.' If that is so, then Jacob—not so much in kissing Rachel as in weeping over her—made what would now be called a proposal of marriage. There is just one slight weakness in the argument.

Sir James FRAZER almost acknowledges it. It is the unfortunate fact that in all the other examples in the Old Testament, the person weeping is clearly overcome with emotion. It is not the survival of a superstition but a genuine outburst of grief. The cases are Joseph's weeping over Benjamin and afterwards over his father, the weeping of David and Jonathan 'till David exceeded,' and in the Book of Tobit the weeping of Raguel when he discovered that Tobias who had come to his house as a stranger was a near kinsman.

Fourteen years ago a book was published with the title of *The Diary of a Church-goer*. It was published anonymously, and no one that we have

ever heard of guessed the author. A new edition has been issued (Macmillan; 5s. net). The author's name is on the title-page. It is the late Lord COURTNEY of Penwith.

When Lord COURTNEY wrote the book he was a considerable heretic. And he withheld his name because he did not want his friends, his more orthodox friends, to feel constrained in his presence. One of the matters on which he was, or thought he was, heretical was the preference of Esau to Jacob.

If that is heresy there are many heretics in our midst. We are told that it is one of the common objections to the Bible expressed by the British soldier. That the wily and milksop Jacob should be preferred to the honest and athletic Esau is more than the soldier can understand. The soldier prefers Esau. But who does not?

Lord COURTNEY says that the Church does not. Almost every one who preaches about Jacob and Esau 'twists and warps his mind with the feeling that Jacob must be justified, and that a belief in the validity of a promise stolen against the mind of the giver was simply an illustration of supreme piety. I heard one the other day admit that every schoolboy liked Esau better than Jacob, and we were left to understand that he agreed with the schoolboy; but he got rid of Esau by remembering that St. Paul had called him a profane person, and so went on his way.'

What troubles Lord COURTNEY most is the idea that, once Isaac had blessed Jacob, though as the result of a trick, he could not recall the blessing. We wish Sir J. G. FRAZER had dealt with that. He does deal with the trick by which Jacob obtained the blessing. He believes that it is the reminiscence of a legal ceremony once observed for the purpose of substituting a younger for an elder brother. And no doubt if that is true it meets Lord COURTNEY'S difficulty, though in a more drastic way than would be readily accepted even by him. It is, however, too uncertain to be

depended on. But Sir J. G. FRAZER deals also with the more serious and much more popular difficulty that Jacob seems to be preferred to Esau.

It is a case of ultimogeniture. Now ultimogeniture—which is the law or custom that gives the inheritance to the youngest son of the family instead of to the eldest—is found in many places, and it is undoubtedly found in the Old Testament. Isaac inherited while Ishmael did not. Joseph was preferred by Jacob to his other sons, and when he was lost and another son was born, Benjamin became the favourite. And not only the favourite, for the name Benjamin means 'the son of the right hand,' 'and that this title marks him out as the lawful heir appears to be indicated by the remarkable account of the way in which Jacob, in blessing his two grandsons, the sons of Joseph, deliberately preferred the younger to the elder by laying his right hand on the head of the younger (Ephraim) and his left hand on the head of the elder (Manasseh), in spite of the protest of their father Joseph, who had placed his sons before their grandfather in such a position that he would naturally lay his right hand on the elder and his left hand on the younger; so that the old man was obliged to cross his hands over his breast in order to reach the head of the younger with his right hand, and the head of the elder with his left.'

There are other examples in the Bible. David cannot be forgotten, nor the fact that David left the kingdom to 'one of his younger sons, Solomon, deliberately setting aside one of his elder sons, Adonijah, who claimed the crown.' But the custom has been found elsewhere. It has been found in England. It is found in England to this day. The title under which it goes in this country is Borough English. For there were at one time, in Nottingham for example, two tenures of land, one called Borough French, by which the tenements descended to the eldest son as at common law; the other called Borough English, by which the tenements descended to the youngest son.

Well, the argument is that in seizing the birth-right and the blessing Jacob was within his right. It was Esau that was the usurper.

The Rev. John ADAMS, B.D., is an acute observer of the times, and an unwearied student of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament there is a certain doctrine which is called vicarious suffering. It had been slipping out of sight before the War, all things being so well with us. Mr. ADAMS sees, what the war has shown to all the world, that it is the most sublime fact of life. He has accordingly written a book on *The Suffering of the Best* (T. & T. Clark; 3s. 6d. net).

The suffering of the *best*—for the revelation is not that one can suffer for another, the heart of it is that the best must suffer for all the rest. When the war began it was our very best that joined up at once and perished. We grudged their sacrifice. It seemed to be so great a loss to the race as well as to us. But they did not grudge it. They gave themselves willingly. If they were indeed the best—physically, mentally, morally—that was just the reason, they answered, why they should go first. And they were right.

We see now that they were right. We are not thinking of what they themselves gained by losing their lives, we are thinking of the gain to the world. We see that it is better for the world that a man should give his life for it, than that he should live to be an example to it. The impression is deeper. It means more to the world. Above all, it means more to God.

And it is how things appear to God that makes the difference. Mr. ADAMS, we have said, is an

Old Testament student. He seems to be especially a student of Isaiah. Now Isaiah had this gift that he could see things as God sees them. The world of Isaiah's day did not see things so. The nations round Israel saw a contemptible little people lying in the dust at their feet. They were ready to drive their war chariots over it and make an end of it. Isaiah also saw Israel in its agony. But he saw that the suffering and the shame, so ruthlessly inflicted by the world around, was borne for the sake of the very world that inflicted it. Then he put his vision into the mouth of the nations themselves, as if they had seen it with him. 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.'

So the contemptible Israelite is the chosen of God for the regeneration—what is our word? reconstruction—of the world. And as God's choice is always the choice of the willing, it is the choice of the best of all the inhabitants of the world. We cannot understand Israel otherwise. God is no respecter of persons or of nations. They willingly offered themselves; they alone, and so His choice fell on them—to suffer vicariously for the sin of the whole world.

You prefer to say that He chose One—an Israelite indeed, the only Israelite in whom there was no guile. You do well. For it must always be the very best available. Isaiah saw Israel suffer vicariously for the world; it was the highest height of the vision that was granted him, and it was very high. But (thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift) we see beyond Isaiah. We see God not sparing His own Son but giving Him up for us all.