

Easter." The transformation scene in "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," by Wm. Hole, Gibson's "London," and Cosmo Monkhouse's article on Wm. Quiller Orchardson, R.A., the Scotch painter, are some other of its artistic features.

Harper's Magazine for April contains a frontispiece in color by Pyle, on "Washington and the French Craze of '93," by Prof. J. B. McMaster. George du Maurier's romance, "The Martian," is continued, and the sixth paper by Poultney Bigelow, on "White Man's Africa," describes the opening of the Cape Colony Parliament, one of the most characteristic and impressive incidents of British Colonial Empire, and discusses the political and social questions which the Jamieson raid has raised between the English and Dutch. "From Home to Throne in Belgium," and the Awakening of a Nation," are other leading articles in this month's number.

The Arena.—Local interest in the April number will centre on two interesting accounts of the struggle going on in Canada between the Roman Catholic priesthood and the press and electorate by F. Clement Brown, of Toronto, and George Stewart, of Quebec City. Governor Pingree, of Michigan, continues the question of Municipal Reform commenced by Mayor Quincy, of Boston. Many other bright and stirring articles brings this number fully up to the average.

McClure's.—*McClure's* for April opens with "A Century of Painting," by W. H. Low, devoted to early decorative painting. The life of Alex. Hamilton, by Hon. H. C. Lodge, with life portraits and notes by C. H. Hart; Grant's Life in Missouri, by Hamlin Garland, and some unpublished letters by General Sherman, go to make up an excellent number. In addition there are stories by Stevenson, A. H. Allen, Kipling, Thanet and Ian Maclaren.

The Expository Times (April) records the finding of an interesting document in Egypt, namely, the Logia of Papias. We shall await with eager expectation an account of the contents of this interesting document, which may possibly throw light on the composition of the Gospels. There are some good remarks in the "Notes" on Canon Gore's recent communication on the subject of Evolution. Among other papers we draw attention to one of Dr. Whitelaw (to be continued) on the question: "Could Jesus Err?" with special reference to a book, recently noticed in these columns, by Dr. Schwarzkopff, on the Prophecies of our Lord. Professor Shearer has an interesting paper on the late Dr. Reynolds, formerly editor of the *British Quarterly*. Mr. Burn concludes his on Dr. Field. The smaller articles and reviews are quite up to the usual high standard.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

BY CANON GEORGE BODY, D.D.

"And when he came to himself, he said, how many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise. . . . Make me as one of thy hired servants."—*St. Luke*, xv. 17-19.

This parable is our Lord's apology for His evangelistic work. However low men or women had fallen in the days of His earthly ministry, there was none of whom He despaired, there was no depth of degradation into which He could not follow to try to find him. "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." That is the charge. What is the answer to the charge? First, because each one of these is the son or daughter of the living God. Sonship is as wide as the limits of the human family. To be a man is to be a Son of God. And I have come from the Father's bosom in among the race of men to care for God's sons and daughters; and obedience to the mission which I have received of the Father who sent Me into the world to save sinners demands that I should be found where sinners are—aye, even eating with them. And the second apology is this: they are recoverable. Each of these, however fallen, is still one who has within him the possibilities of recovery. He may have wandered far from the Father's home, like a lost sheep, but he can be recovered to the true fold. He may be like the piece of money that has fallen to the ground, and even the very image that is stamped upon it of the King be obscured; but the image is there, and the copy re-

coverable. Wherever you see a man, you see one who has in him, in the deepest depths of his being, the very image of God. And because man is recoverable He goes to seek him, teaching him this great truth, that, if he would return to his father's home, he has only to retrace the steps of his departure from his father's house in utter repentance.

How splendid is this position of the Gospel, that it despairs of no man, it despairs of no woman. Right to the very end—yes, up to the death-bed—yes, in the prison cell—the minister of the Gospel dares to go to the condemned convict, and to call him even then back to the dignity of the recovery of manhood, back to the Father's house.

We are told that everything in the world, physical and moral, is the result simply of cumulative forces from ages which are concentrated in the living present, and that it is impossible, absolutely impossible, for the individual to break himself free from this cumulative force that lies behind him—what is called the doctrine of heredity in its more pronounced form. But sinners have been converted unto God; they have, and are being, thank God! to day, and not merely in isolated instances. St. Paul, writing his epistle, says, certain men, certain classes or sinners cannot inherit the kingdom of God; but he adds, "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." How can such a position as that just taken up explain the unquestionable historical phenomenon of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus? Nay, to pass beyond the limits of Scripture—for, though I cannot tell why it is, some people imagine there is a difficulty about Scripture stories—how, if this position be a true one, can you explain the phenomenon of the conversion of Augustine? Plainly, in each they are under the influence of a new force; plainly, the connection between their present and their past was broken; plainly, they were set free from that cumulative force of evil which was upon them in the present through their contact with the past. The abiding facts in the history of man within the limits of Christianity prove this distinct truth, that there is, in the message of God which comes from Christ, a power that can bring the sinner to repent, and that makes practical in his case what seems impractical in the link of cause and effect.

And this is the third explanation which Christ gives of His work—that not only does He go to sinners to seek among them those with whom His Father's house shall be peopled through eternity because they are His Father's sons, and there is for them the way of return through repentance, but because He knows there is in the message that He bears to them from the Father nothing less than the power of recreating grace. The voice of the Lord is a glorious voice; it breaketh the rocks; there is nothing that it cannot do; but of the spheres in which the power of that voice has been most manifested is the sphere in which it has wrought out—I can use no other term than this—miraculous conversion; and Christ comes to men, to you and to me, with this conviction, that the message which He bears from the Father, when He calls them back to the Father, has a sure sacramental efficacy that can and will raise men out of sin and bring them back to the Father's house, by working in them the mystery of a real repentance, because there must be this repentance if a man is to come back, this change, this inner change of man. Man, after all, is not a coin; he cannot be brought back to God as a lost coin can be restored. Man, after all, is not like a lost sheep; God cannot lay hold upon him without his own will to bring him back to Himself. Man belongs to a higher order than the mineral kingdom or the animal kingdom; man belongs to the spirit kingdom; and man has a will. And so a deeper mystery than that brought out in the previous parables must be faced if our Lord is really and truly to explain to us the mystery of man's return to God. There must come a time when he is in the far country, when he must awaken to his sense of distance from God; there must be a time when he wills to return from that alienation from God to recovered reunion with God; there must be action definite and clear upon this inner resolve. No man is brought back to God, except he returns to God. True, Christ comes because He knows He is sent by God to men to bring them back to God, that He can bring His gracious influence so to bear upon them that their will shall be stirred into the activity of repentance, and that they shall return as penitents to their Father's house, to be readmitted to their Father's house.

Now see the method; it is a most beautiful spiritual study. Here is a man in the far country. Up to a given moment he is really in a position of spiritual madness. The sinner is always a fool; and the Bible invariably takes up this position, and as a fool he is more an object of pity than anything else. I hope one does not undervalue the exceeding sinfulness of a life of sin; but, I confess, the more I live in the world, the more I know of my own nature and of the nature of other people, the more I am convinced that a man who is living a life of sin is a thing

of pity. Canon Gregory Smith, in a remarkable volume of Bampton Lectures some years ago, said this: 'A sinner denies the personality of everyone with whom he sins: the one with whom he sins is always to him not a person, but a thing to be used for his own enjoyment, then thrown aside.' Aye, but it is worse still than that. The sinner not only denies the personality of those with whom he sins, but he denies his own personality; he looks upon himself rather as a kind of animal, lacking this mysterious gift of personality. I suppose the truest definition of madness is to be ignorant of one's own personality. Yet the sinner, as a matter of fact, is ignorant in the truest sense of his own personality. If you are going to bring him back to God, the first thing to do is to bring him to realize what he is in the very essence of his being. This is the first thing God does; He leads him to realize the fact that he is a person; that because he is a person he is dowered with the awful gift of endlessness of existence. You cannot destroy a personality. Of course, nothing that really exists can be destroyed. You cannot destroy that which is permanent in the human body, for instance. The matter that is in my body may exist under other combinations; the force in my body may exist under other conditions; but if you cannot destroy one particle of matter in me, you cannot destroy one particle of force. There is no such thing as anything existent going into non-being; it is simply impossible. And when we deal with that mysterious spirit, that innermost being, that personality, it is the same. I cannot escape from the personality of my God. 'If I ascend up into heaven Thou art there; if I go down into hell Thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.' Then there is my own personality; and the will of God awakens me to the realization of this personality.

When I come to myself there flashes upon me as in a moment the awful responsibility of the future state. Where am I? I am perishing with hunger. It is always the feeling that comes with the awakening of personality. Bear with me while I mention a few instances. When Isaiah awakens what does he say? 'Woe is me, I am undone.' When the Publican is awakened what cry does he make? 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' When the 8000 were awakened what was the common cry that came over every lip? 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' And when the Philippian gaoler was awakened, what was his cry? 'Master, what shall I do to be saved?' It always comes. With the thought of our Father's love comes the awakening of the conscience that I, in His presence, am a guilty man—a perishing man. Blessed is that man who has been awakened by the grace of God to know that in very reality, in the far country in which he is, he is in the most awful peril, far beyond what imagination can conceive or what tongue can tell.

The man's personality is awakened, and then he is brought to a deep conviction of sin; and this leads on to the thought of the Father's love and tenderness, the thought of joy and rest and satisfaction, and the safety of the Father's house, and the thought of the servant's state even becomes a state of attraction. Oh! if it were not an impossibility; if I could only pass the threshold of my Father's house, and be numbered with His hired servants. Memory comes in and brings with it a sense of overwhelming guilt; but with memory there also comes this, the realization too that He is my Father. True, I have forfeited all claims upon His love; add true, except of His mercy, I cannot pass His threshold; I have no right to claim even to be numbered with His servants. But then He is my Father. Here am I in this degradation; there He is in His house, and between Him and me lies a sink—my Father. And with this comes the hope that it may be possible once more to return to my Father's house. Do you think it is possible? I have sinned, I have spent the portion that fell to me of mine inheritance; but is it not possible that He might number me with His servants?

Hope springs up. Yes, but more than this. Now that the hope comes, what am I to do? These three things. I must give up. 'I will arise.' That is the first thing; clearly if I am going back to the Father's house I must give up. I must come away from this far country, from this riotous living, come away from these companions, from this self-indulgence. I must give up. Yes. And what is the next thing? The next thing is, I must go back to my Father. Nothing else will do; He can alone re-install me, even into that lower position which I crave to have in His house. 'I will go to my Father.' Yes, and what then? When in my Father's house I will kneel down at His feet and confess; I will say, 'Father, I have sinned. I will just kneel and confess; I will make a clean breast, telling Him everything I know I have done. And then, having made an open confession, I will pray for mercy. 'I am not worthy to be called Thy son; make me as one of Thy hired servants.' If you