

Entre Nous.

'Putting Our House in Order.'

Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co. have just published a book (3s. 6d. net) with the above title. The chapters are written by various bishops and clergy of the Church of England and in the Foreword there is a long list, headed by the Archbishop of York, of those who commend the book to the careful attention of the members of the Church of England. The main purpose of the book is to advocate certain reforms 'which, if carried out, will promote the efficiency of the Church's work, by removing some of the present economic anomalies and ensuring a fairer and more enlightened use of its resources. . . . We do not wish to make exaggerated claims. It would be absurd to argue that any economic change can of itself transform a lazy, domineering or ill-tempered priest into a true minister of the Gospel. But it is worth asking whether some measure of the moral and spiritual inefficiency of the clergy—and to moral and spiritual inefficiency we must all admit—is not attributable to their entanglement in an economic system within the Church itself which is sub-Christian, which is in many respects a far too close reflection of the un-Christian economic system of the world.'

The basic principle which is advocated is that every priest should be paid a stipend which would enable him to discharge his services to the Church efficiently; and the needs of his family would be taken into consideration. Family allowances are therefore advocated, larger groupings and more team work. It is a plea for big changes in the use of men and money. In a very clear and telling way the defects of the present endowment system are brought out. 'The inequalities between benefices are gross, glaring, and irrational. . . . They make the clergy think more about preferment than is good for their souls' health or for the quality of their work. . . . Disparities between clerical poverty and, what one may euphemistically call, clerical affluence do not make for clerical fellowship or express Christian community. . . . Thirdly, inequalities between benefices result in livings often being considered "important" for irrelevant reasons, and being sought after for wrong and unspiritual reasons.' The use of endowments results in a waste of man-power, it is argued. 'Man-power is concentrated most unequally and not at the strategic points. In one place five men may be stationed where two would suffice, and in another

only one where five are needed. The new housing areas where a sense of community has gradually to be created are points where in the early years the church should be able to concentrate its effective clergy and lay workers in large numbers so that the community sense in these areas may have a chance of growing around a centre of spiritual life. The church is not doing that because it cannot for financial reasons so concentrate its man-power.'

This is a small book which surely requires the most careful attention. At the end we find Ten Propositions for reform clearly worked out. Those who are interested are asked to make themselves known to the correspondent in their own diocese.

'The Family.'

The Family is a novel of Russian exile life, and the author, Nina Fedorova, is to be congratulated on writing a delicate, unusual story with skilfully drawn characters. There were only five in the Family—Granny, Mother, a daughter and two nephews. It was ex-big, ex-great, ex-prosperous. Now the five lived at Tientsin and Mother kept a cheap boarding-house. But the Family was not unhappy. 'Life is hard in exile and poverty. But wonderful is the freedom of the human soul! And the Family was not chained to the pettiness of its humdrum existence. Tears and laughter, joy and sorrow, philosophy and a good joke—they had a generous share of everything.' It was not a home to which well-dressed English people came. Well-bred English girls would never be allowed by their parents to visit a poor Russian family. 'Why? Lida did not know, but she would never lay the fault at the door of the foreigners. Why should they be interested in her? . . . What could she show them if they should come to see her and her home? It was not their fault that she was born a Russian.' Peter was bitter at times. "After twenty years of struggle, what remains of the Russians in exile? How many have died, degraded? We are finished by now. It is a fine time for us to say that no one has helped us. *They* let us alone."

"My dear," said Granny gently, "do not talk like that. They are not obliged to help us."

"Not obliged! Are they not Christians? In the whole of their foreign possessions they could not provide homes for one million Russian refugees, then all able to work. . . ."

“My dear,” Granny interrupted mildly, “in my youth—in the splendid house of my parents—I used to read sometimes in newspapers about the famines in India. We studied in geography also: one million of the population died yearly from famine. Well, what did *I* do about that? One comes to understanding through experience, only through suffering, I should say.”

The boarders are, as one would expect, a varied lot, a Chinese gentleman, five Japanese gentlemen, Mme. Militza, a professional fortune-teller, Professor Chernov, whose brilliant intellect is beginning to give way through his suffering, and his patient wife, Anna Petrovna, and the excitable Mrs. Parrish, a wealthy English lady who turned out to be a confirmed drunkard. ‘All the attention of the Family was directed towards hindering her from buying liquors or preventing her drinking when she managed to get some.’ Perhaps, after Granny herself, Mrs. Parrish is one of the best-drawn characters. After her cure by Granny’s ceaseless efforts she meditates:

‘How does it happen, she thought, that some people fail to tie anybody to themselves or to tie themselves to anybody, while others are centres of human joys, and pain, and affection . . . as Granny was before, as Mother is now? Why are some people like that? What makes them so? Suffering? But have I not suffered? Have I not? Yet my pain was evidently vain, it led me nowhere, taught me nothing. It never resulted in anything, but remained a pain which ate into all of my being. . . .

‘Here, at Tientsin, she had been working for charity. Rummage sales, charity balls, Christmas presents for destitute children. In this way she had given thousands of dollars for the poor. . . . We have our methodical English way of helping, she thought. So wherein lies the difference? My heart had no part in it. . . . But is that necessary so long as I give money?’

‘Suddenly she felt a stab in her heart:

‘And I, myself, was I in need of money when I was brought here? Could money save me? . . .

‘It was not for my money that Granny nursed me as if I were her own child. Yes, yes, beside the ordinary relations between people—that of being brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, children—there is another kind—the ties of charity, of sympathy, of pity . . . and those ties bind people into another kind of group, a Family in spirit.’

Prayer.

‘Granny knew only one cure for all the misery which could befall a human being, and this was prayer.’ . . .

‘Slowly Granny dressed and went to church. As usual, she left the house dull and tired, and came back serene and calm, with a radiant face. . . . It was not, in fact, a real church building; it was only a room extremely poor, adapted for church services. The priest was a Chinese, who came from a family of martyrs to the Christian faith. Humbly and ardently they prayed. None but the poor, the old, and invalids came to that church. Not many candles were lit, for those people had no worldly goods to offer their God; they had no gold, no silver—all they could give was their faith, their devotion buried deeply in the silence of their souls, brought to that last refuge through all the trials of life—through blood, pain, tears. And the same Christ who used to look down at Granny in Russia from golden frames, wearing a pearly crown, whose body was then beautified with diamonds, sapphires, and rubies in those splendid churches of the past, the same, the *only* Christ, now looked down from the poor wooden-and-paper icons, freed from jewellery—and He was the same. In this ever-changing world only He remained the same. And He spoke to Granny the same words of encouragement and consolation, gave the same promises, and from the inexhaustible source of His love she drank gladly and freely. And the source never failed, but was open to all who deigned to stoop and drink.’¹

J. M. Barrie and Princess Margaret.

After closing *The Story of J. M. B.*, by Denis Mackail, one is left uncertain about a number of things but never about Barrie’s love for small children. Let us retell—so that it may be told in turn to other children—what happened on Princess Margaret’s third birthday at Glamis. Barrie had the privilege of sitting beside her at tea. Some of her presents were on the table, ‘and they seemed to me,’ he wrote afterwards, for one of Cynthia’s books, *The King’s Daughters*, ‘to be as simple things that might have come from sixpenny shops, but she was in a frenzy of glee about them, especially about one to which she had given the place of honour by her plate. I said to her as one astounded:

“Is that really your very own?”

‘And she saw how I envied her, and immediately placed it between us with the words:

“It is yours *and* mine.”’

Words not likely to be forgotten; least of all when they came from a Princess on her third birthday. But in these two days Barrie had put his spell on both the royal children; and again there was

¹ Nina Fedorova, *The Family*, 116 f.

another phrase that came back to him from the younger. His name had been mentioned, and instantly she had said: 'I know that man. He is my greatest friend, and I am *his* greatest friend.' . . . Those words of hers—'It is yours *and* mine'—and what she had said afterwards—'He is my greatest friend, and I am *his* greatest friend'—had both been spoken again at every performance of *The Boy David*. Quite early in its history, at another meeting with the real author, Barrie had confessed this act of plagiarism; and just as he had once made that royalty arrangement with Jack Llewelyn Davies for the line that he had used in *Little Mary*, so now he had told Princess Margaret that she should have a penny for each time that each of her two phrases was spoken from the stage.

'She hadn't forgotten this. And now it appeared that her father, His Majesty the King, had known of the offer and hadn't forgotten it, either. A message reached Barrie at the beginning of March—a kind and human message from one with the heaviest burden of all—that if he didn't take steps to carry out his promise, he would be hearing from His Majesty's solicitors. So this was the gleam, and rather more than a gleam.' A bag of bright new pennies was got from the bank. A proper agreement was drawn up by Barrie's own solicitor, but by this time Barrie was seriously ill. He was not able to deliver the bag. 'Their Majesties the King and Queen had transmitted their inquiries and sympathy, and the Queen, with royal thoughtfulness, had arranged for the indenture to be countersigned by Princess Margaret, and sent around to the nursing-home.'

Religious Education.

'It was nearly bedtime in the shelter and my gifted colleague, T. C. Baird, was making a "round" of the sections and chatting with the people before they turned in. For more than three months this young minister—still a probationer—has been padre of his own shelter, and meeting, together with Mrs. Hornabrook, the shelter "mother," the complex problems of a family which has varied from seven hundred to a thousand people every night.

'He was accosted by a young man. Prayers had just been said and it is possible that evening devotions

had turned the thought of the fellow towards divine things. "Do you believe in God, sir?" he asked.

'The question was rather odd, I suppose, addressed to a man who had just been engaged in public prayer, and who had slept every night among them with a clerical collar on, but he answered quite simply, "Why, yes, of course."

"But there are many queer things about life and religion it's 'ard to understand," the young fellow said.

"There are," assented the padre. "But if you get the heart of religion right, the rest of it falls into place . . . and the heart of it is Jesus Christ."

'The young fellow leaned against his bunk and said, "I've 'eard of Him."

"Of course you have," said a kindly woman standing by. "He was the Son of Mary."

"Why, yes," he responded, with eager understanding, obviously glad to be keeping in the conversation. "And Noah's Ark was His uncle."

'There was not a shadow of a smile on his face, nor had he the slightest idea that he was in error. He is about thirty-two years of age, is married, and has two children. To all appearances he would pass as a typical friendly shelterer.

'I discussed the point recently with my neighbour, Canon F. R. Barry, the author of *The Relevance of Christianity*. We agreed that the title of this fine book would be a joke in shelterland. Few things more irrelevant than Christianity in the thought of most of my new friends it would be hard to find.¹

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch.

A number of readers have drawn our attention to the unfortunate error in the Notes of Recent Exposition last month. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch is King Edward VII. Professor of English Literature in the University of Cambridge.

¹ W. E. Sangster, in *The Methodist Recorder*, 22nd May 1941.