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Entre Nous.

Letters to a Friend.

A small volume of letters of Rabindranath Tagore to C. F. Andrews has just been published by Messrs. Allen & Unwin—the title is *Rabindranath Tagore: Letters to a Friend* (7s. 6d. net). Most of the letters were written in 1920-21, when the poet was travelling in the United States, getting into touch with men of peace and goodwill in the West, and opening to them the hospitality of his religious retreat at Santiniketan.

'Why have I been made to carry this burden, I ask myself over and over again, shouting myself hoarse in this noisy world where everybody is crying up his own wares? Pushing the wheelbarrows of propaganda from continent to continent—is this going to be the climax of a poet's life? It seems to me like an evil dream, from which I occasionally wake up in the dead of night and grope about in the bed, asking myself in consternation: "Where is my music?"

'It is lost, but I had no right to lose it, for I did not earn it with the sweat of my brow; it was a gift to me, which I could deserve if I knew how to love it. You know I have said somewhere that "God praises me when I do good; but God loves me when I sing." Praise is reward; it can be measured against the work you render; but love is above all rewards; it is measureless.'

There are few intimate touches, but now and again we have a glimpse into what Andrews is to him. 'When all my thoughts were furiously revolving, like dead leaves, in a whirlwind of desire for raising funds, a picture came to my hand; it was that of Sujata offering a cup of milk to Buddha. Its message went deep into my heart. It said to me: "The cup of milk comes to you unasked when you have gone through your *tapasya*. It is offered to you with love, and only love can bring its homage to truth."

'Then your figure at once came to my mind. The milk has been sent to me through you. It is infinitely more than anything that can come from the cheque-book of the rich. I had become famished in the wilderness of solitude for lack of sympathy and comradeship, when you brought your cup of love to me, which is the true life-giving food freely offered by life. And as the poet Morris says, "Love is enough." That voice of love calls me away from the lure of dollars—the voice that comes to nestle in my heart from across the sea,

from the shady avenue of *sal* trees resonant with laughter and songs of simple joy.'

We have no hesitation in saying that we owe Mr. Andrews a debt of gratitude for his decision to publish the letters. That they were written for one person only in the first place, and that an intimate friend, is only an advantage; for it has enabled Tagore to express freely his inmost thoughts on questions near his heart—internationalism, peace and war, self-realization, formal Christianity, the dangers which beset the preacher, pain and sorrow, and many others. Of pain he says: 'This world is wonderfully beautiful, but you cannot help feeling that there is a lurking pain in its heart which has its own immortal beauty. It is a pearl shell of wonderful tints and design, hiding in its bosom a tear-drop which gives it priceless value. All our payments have to be made in pain; otherwise life and this world would become cheap as dirt.'

But to give the full impression of the beauty of thought and language we must give one letter in greater fulness.

The Turn of the Divine.

'NEW YORK, December 19th, 1920.

'When Life began her first experiments, she was mightily proud of the hugeness of her animal specimens. The bigger the bodies were, the more extravagantly large the armour had to be made for their protection. The ludicrous creatures, in order to maintain their balance, had to carry a tail which was absurdly disproportionate to the rest of their bodies. It went on like this till life became a burden to itself and to the exchequer of creation. It was uneconomical, and therefore not only harmful but ungainly. True economy is the principle of beauty in practical arithmetic. Driven to bewilderment, Life began to seek for a pause in her insanity of endless multiplication.

All forms of ambitious powers are obsessed by this delirium of multiplication. All its steps are steps towards augmentation and not completeness. But ambitions that rely solely upon the suggestion of their tails and armour are condemned to carry their own obstruction till they have to stop.

In its early history, Life, after its orgies of megalomania, had at last to think of disarmament. But how did she effect it? By boldly relinquishing the ambition to produce bigness—and man was

born helplessly naked and small. All of a sudden he was disinherited of the enormity of flesh when apparently he was most in need of it. But this prodigious loss gained for him his freedom and victory.

'Then began the reign of Mind. It brought its predecessor of gigantic bulk under subjection. But, as often happens, the master became the parasite of the slave, and Mind also tried to achieve greatness by the bigness of materials. The dynasty of Mind followed the dynasty of Flesh, but employed this flesh as its prime minister.

Our history is waiting for the dynasty of Spirit. The human succeeded the brutal; and now comes the turn of the Divine.'¹

The Warrior, the Woman, and the Christ.

At a soldiers' meeting held behind the lines, a perky little private asked Mr. Studdert Kennedy whether he was going back to take mothers' meetings *après la guerre*. A roar of laughter greeted Mr. Kennedy's reply. 'Look here, young fellow my lad, you seem to think that you are more important than your mother. You come off it. I'd rather talk to your mother than to you any day of the week, Sundays included.' What made this private associate the padre with mothers' meetings? The answer is obvious, Mr. Kennedy thinks. It is because the warrior—the really manly man—despises them both. Why does he despise them both? This was the question which set Mr. Kennedy's mind working, and which has led him to write *The Warrior, the Woman, and the Christ* (Hodder & Stoughton; 6s. net). It does not pretend to be a book for the expert. It is written for the ordinary man who is up against the problems of life and who has got to the stage of asking himself, Is there any meaning in life, and, if so, what is it? He will find that he can read Mr. Studdert Kennedy's book not only with profit, but with pleasure. For it is always easier to follow thought in the making than to grasp cut-and-dry conclusions. And so we companion along the way with Mr. Kennedy as question after question rises up to tease his mind. Why is it that in all the churches women outnumber men, so that it appears to us quite natural to hear 'a very good congregation, and quite a nice number of men'? Is Christianity as it is preached to-day not a man's religion? Is the minister called upon to preach a more 'manly' Christ? What attitude can we take up to the fact of sex? Must it be atheistic or agnostic? Or can we take up the positively theistic attitude that sex has behind

it some great spiritual purpose? In short, has Christianity some positive message for both men and women, some ideal of life where the creative craving of the woman will not be lost but fulfilled and where the warrior will not lose or bottle up his fighting spirit? And so Mr. Studdert Kennedy comes to Jesus the creative warrior who reveals the creative warrior God. 'We are now, I think, in a position to return an intelligible if inadequate answer to the great question: What kind of human life did Jesus live on earth? He lived the life of the transforming man determined, for the sake of the joy that was set before Him, to transform the world of men and things into the Kingdom of God, and by means of a creative conflict waged without thought of wounds or death to make the world of appearance manifest the eternal values of reality. He was the warrior man with all the warrior qualities—fire, energy, intellect, aggressiveness, and attack—undiminished and unimpaired, but entirely consecrated to the creative purpose of the woman, the building of the kingdom of life and growth which is the Kingdom of God.'

'Whosoever shall smite thee.'

'From the practical point of view He was a teacher of absurdities. "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." What sort of mess would we be in if we really tried to practise that? I remember once in the North of England endeavouring to explain and interpret that saying to a large crowd in the open air, when an odd specimen of humanity with a heavily pock-marked face and red rims to his eyes looked up underneath another man's elbow and said: "That's all right and tha can do as tha likes, but I'm not going to be made a — doormat of for nobody." It is the idea that Christ bids us do nothing in the face of evil, but simply lie down to be trodden on, that makes His teaching seem absurd. But the man who, being smitten on the one cheek, deliberately turned the other, would not be doing nothing, he would be doing what, for a free and full-blooded man, is the most difficult thing in the world to do. He would have to be a very remarkable person, a man devoid of fear, and a man devoid of fear is possessed of power—moral power. Even beasts are uncomfortable and cowed in the presence of the man who has cast out fear.

'What Christ is bidding us do is to substitute moral force for physical force in our conflict with evil, and there is much more in that than appears on the surface. What moral force is, it is difficult to say in words, but even now it is an immense

¹ Rabindranath Tagore: *Letters to a Friend*, 107.

and incalculable power in the world, and who can say to what lengths it can and will be extended? '1

Virtues in our Character.

When the Rev. William Gray, M.A., retired from Cambuslang, he was persuaded to re-write the addresses which he had given to the children. He calls this collection of children's sermons *Happy as Kings* (James Clarke; 3s. 6d. net), and of it the late Dr. G. H. Morrison says in a Foreword, 'I shall be greatly surprised if this book does not take high rank in the ever-growing library of addresses to the younger folk.' One that attracts us is on 'The Mavis—A Famous Builder.' Mr. Gray watched the mavis building her nest. Then in autumn, after she was done with it, he took it out of the bush and into his study, and he found out that the nest was made up of 3727 little things, every one of which the mavis had carried. 'Please stand at attention and salute the great builder as you would Solomon.' And surely Mr. Gray deserves salutations also, for it must have taken him hours of work to count up these 3727 items. He found 927 withered grasses—old things got from past summers. 'So in our character should appear the fine old virtues that appeared in the heroes and heroines of the past.' And, secondly, he found in the nest 582 bits of moss, and moss belongs to the lowly plants. 'So in our character should appear the lowly virtues, humility and meekness.' Third, he found in the nest, 1673 hairs, some of them were very long; they were woven amongst the moss and leaves and grasses in order to bind them together. 'So in our character there should be the *binding virtues: faith, trust, confidence.*' Fourth, he found 257 bits of carpet and hearthrug. 'I know where she got them. Spring cleaning was on. . . . So in our character there should appear the *homely virtues: courtesy, mannerliness, usefulness, obedience; the very common qualities that everybody must possess.*' 'Fifth, I found in the build of the nest *twelve feathers*, and feathers remind us of *wings*, with which to rise. So we must have the *hopeful virtues* in our character.' The sixth thing which he found in the nest was a number of soft, downy, cosy things. 'So we must have in our character the *gentle virtues*. We must be kind, pitiful, gentle, compassionate.' And lastly, he found a number of coloured things—red worsted, a bit of blue cloth, one or two gay feathers. 'So in our character we should have the *lightsome, happy virtues*. We should learn to laugh heartily, to be merry and

¹ G. A. Studdert Kennedy, *The Warrior, the Woman, and the Christ*, 86.

bright, to love music and singing, to love sports and games.'

NEW POETRY.

Edna A. Kahla.

The imprint of the Poetry Lovers' Fellowship is upon a small volume containing *The Poems of Edna A. Kahla* (5s. net), and we are told that this imprint upon a volume indicates 'that the contents are of the highest poetic value and their publication beyond any possibility of criticism.' Human nature being what it is, such a statement is inclined to arouse all our prejudices, but the poems themselves disarm us, for there is no doubt that the authentic note is here in Miss Kahla's work:

THANKSGIVING.

Thou Who hast laden me
With countless eager, touching tendernesses,
Be gentle in Thy generosity!
How shall I bear the burden of this love
Who am but frailty?

And how shall I requite that mighty Heart
That lonely, puissant, patient, and apart,
Awaits how wistfully
In love's reply one fond, one fugitive thought,
One murmured word?

O Thou Who waitest sad and patiently,
I cannot slake the love-thirst of Thy Heart;
Knowest Thou not my utter poverty?
Even my gratitude I ask of Thee.

DAY'S END.

I cannot bring thee broken offerings;
Bearing such gifts what could I say to thee?
'Accept my treachery?'

Wilt thou receive these broken offerings,
Fallen from faltering hands
Because the road was rough and wearying?
In trembling hands,
Eager, but frail, I could not hold them fast.
They fell at last.—

The road was long and rough and wearying.

Shall ways be gentle if the feet be wild?
Give Me the fragments, child.