

Jissen Women's University Rare Books  
Honma Hisao Collection

Digital Archives of Mason Library

Oscar Wilde  
Scrapbook

Vol. 3

The at a d had Art ver Q. C is a sat in a v fill hea ove sca Mr gol wit the Bec pic in t per we wit edg wh all fall mu the to the rou firn ver ruc the par whi cret ros yok bro for " E out hig com ing of 1 the



LORD GORING.

*"Every man of ambition has to fight his century with its own weapons."*



LADY CHILTERN.

*"And yet you will not lie to me!"*



LORD GORING AND PHIPPS (MR. BROOKFIELD).

*"I don't observe any alteration in your Lordship's appearance."*



VICOMTE DE NANJAC (MR. COSMO STUART), AND LADY BASILDON.

*"I'm quite English in all my tastes."*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALFRED ELLIS, UPPER BAKER STREET, N.W.

forg of al was Hay still cigu shou



MISS FLORENCE WEST AS MRS. CHEVELEY.

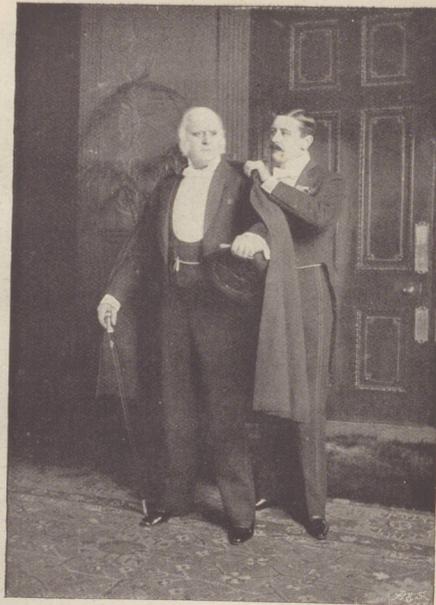
*"I've a perfect passion for listening through keyholes. One always hears such wonderful things!"*

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY HANA, STRAND.



MRS. MARCHMONT AND LADY BASILTON.

"How well it becomes us, Olivia!"



LORD CAVERSHAM AND LORD GORING.

LORD CAVERSHAM: "Put down my cloak, Sir!"



SIR ROBERT CHILTERN, LORD GORING, AND LADY CHILTERN.

SIR ROBERT: "Gertrude, here is my letter of resignation."



THE VICOMTE, LADY BASILTON, MRS. MARCHMONT, AND MR. MONTFORD (MR. STANFORD).

THE VICOMTE: "Will you have some supper?"

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALFRED ELLIS, UPPER BAKER STREET, N.W.

THE DRAMA.  
 "A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE."  
 THERE is a word of frequent occurrence in the vocabulary of English Podsnappery which it is customary to apply to any play of Mr. Oscar Wilde's, or to any book of Mr. Oscar Wilde's, or, indeed, to anything that is his. It is the word "un-English." Many quite worthy people will, probably, have already tacked this adjective to his new Haymarket piece, *A Woman of No Importance*, and if to be bright and witty, audacious and paradoxical, is to be un-English, then the epithet befits the play. Yet witty allusion, barbed epigram, cut-and-thrust repartee, were not always un-English, for was not Congreve a true-born Englishman? Another name comes naturally to the point of the pen, the name of Sheridan. Unfortunately for the illustration, Sheridan, though an English classic, was not an Englishman; he was an Irishman—and so, by the way, is Mr. Oscar Wilde. It is quite fitting then, that Mr. Wilde should revive the Sheridanian tradition, and restore the pleasure of brilliant conversation to a stage from which it has been too long absent. The only objection that need be made is that Mr. Wilde's zeal in this direction has been somewhat excessive. Sheridan's clever talk is never, as Mr. Wilde's too frequently is, talk in the air; it is always dramatic, it helps on the play, it illustrates character. With Mr. Wilde the talk is often an end in itself, it has no vital connection with the particular play of which it forms a part, it might

woman, lovely woman." Lord Illingworth is always giving us woman—in a definition. "Women represent the triumph of matter over mind—just as men represent the triumph of mind over morals." There are only two sorts of women in society—"the plain and the coloured." The excessive complacency with which Lord Illingworth reels off these definitions of the sex verges perilously on the fatuous. In real life it is not the ripe man-of-the-world who is full of shallow philosophising at the expense of the sex, but the stripling undergraduate. And here you see what I mean by the statement that Mr. Wilde's talk is essentially undramatic. Lord Illingworth is presented to us as an accomplished worldling, at once a statesman and an arbiter of taste in the fashionable world. Now, such a man would never be so fond, in actual life, of the sound of his own voice, and he would be much more chary of his epigrams; he would leave them to mere literary persons and other unfashionables. Your true *grand seigneur* cannot condescend to be as talkative as a professional diner-out. But, unreal as Lord Illingworth is, he is vastly amusing. In the man who can define a foxhunter as "the unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable" much may be forgiven.

The purpose of Mr. Wilde's play—if Mr. Wilde will plead guilty to anything so commonplace as a purpose—is to "show up" this heartless libertine, and to turn the tables on him. The man discovers that his private secretary is his own son by a woman whom he has betrayed and long since forgotten, as



HESTER WORSLEY (Miss Julia Neilson) GERALD ARBUTHNOT (Mr. Fred Terry) MRS. ARBUTHNOT (Mrs. Bernard Beere) LORD ILLINGWORTH (Mr. Beethoven Tree)

as well be put into the mouth of one character as of another. He is too prone to range all his personages in a semi-circle (like the occupants of Célimène's drawing-room in *Les Femmes Savantes*), and to set them for a whole quarter-of-an-hour popping off epigrams about things in general, while the piece stands still, and our interest in it—as a piece—grows cold. When the supply of epigram is momentarily exhausted, the play is resumed. This method—the method by which a layer of talk is alternated with a layer of action—is excellent for making sandwiches, not quite so excellent for making plays. When Mr. Wilde has learned to weave the warp of his wit into the woof of his story, or, to use a better figure, when he has learned to make the one spring spontaneously out of the other, instead of being a mere parasitic growth attached to it—why then he will be a very considerable dramatist, and everything will be for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

Meanwhile, it has to be admitted that his wit is often of so first-rate a quality that one willingly pardons its dramatic irrelevance. It is, perhaps, too good to be always original. The definition, for instance, of duty as "that which we expect from others," belongs of right, I think, to M. Alexandre Dumas *filis*. Sometimes Mr. Wilde does not hesitate to pilfer from his own earlier self, as in the definition of women as "sphinxes without secrets." This, by the way, is only one of Lord Illingworth's innumerable definitions of woman. My Lord Illingworth reminds me of the bagman in "Pickwick," who was always proposing a toast to the sex: "Gents, I give you

"of no importance." On the discovery being made, what passes with him for paternal sentiment begins to work; he likes the lad, likes to think that he can be of use to the lad, that while the woman can do nothing for the lad, he can do everything. And so the poor mother sees her boy, the one compensation she had for her shame, drawn away from her side by the very man by whom her shame was caused. There seems a fiendish injustice in this—but the reckoning is at hand. I use the phrase sacred to melodrama, because the device by which the crisis of the play is brought about is somewhat melodramatic. The son finds my lord insulting the girl whom he, the son, secretly adores. Up goes his clenched fist until stopped by the mother's cry—"hold, he is your father." Thereafter the son's efforts are directed to compelling his father to make "reparation" to his mother by marriage. But as the mother very sensibly (though rather too lengthily) points out, marriage with a man who has betrayed and deserted her would be a very poor sort of reparation; and, backed up by the boy's sweetheart—a Puritan maiden from New England—she steadfastly puts aside this solution of the difficulty as no solution at all. It is when the offer of marriage comes spontaneously from the seducer himself (he has twinges of repentance, and wishes to be able to recognise his son) that the woman's triumph comes. She treats his offer with such contempt that he is stung to words of low insult, she strikes him across the face with his glove, and he sinks from her presence, a pitiful creature, "a man," as she says, "of no importance."

APRIL 29, 1893

467

## “Place aux Dames”

By LADY VIOLET GREVILLE

Men are often instinctively right in their taste without knowing why. An instance of this may be cited in their predilection for black or white in women's dress. Compared with the garish and dazzling colours of the frivolous ladies in Mr. Oscar Wilde's new play, the simple black worn by Mrs. Bernard Beere, and the grey and white dresses of Miss Neilson, looked positively refined and distinguished. They seemed to belong to another more delicate sphere of womanhood, where all was quiet, subdued, and instinct with exquisite grace. I have often noticed this effect in a ballroom, where the women dressed in black or in white seemed to stand out in relief, with their beauty accentuated. It is the brilliant background that produces this excellent result. Sombre dresses in a dingy street, on a grey November day, are destitute of beauty. They need contrast, and then it is that the ruddy rays of a street-lamp, a woman's scarlet bonnet, the bunch of daffodils in a flower-girl's basket, give just the true touch of colour, the necessary contrast to make a picture. But set a beautiful woman dressed in black in a dazzling frame and her beauty becomes distinguished and unique immediately. No doubt this is what men feel when they tell a woman to dress in black, for then she is sure to be *well* dressed. The coloured dresses in the play were exaggerated in colour. They were overdone in gaudiness, and thus the necessary relief of shadow afforded by the black became doubly grateful. It is not every woman who cares to dress so as to be a foil to her friend's beauty, yet that is what happens when in the midst of the multicoloured hues of some vast assembly a handsome blonde in black passes among the rainbow tints. Where the brightest light is, there must be the deepest shadow. So in the Park, or at the play, there is always a pretty young widow to fascinate men's gaze.

The morality *versus* the dresses of the new play at the Haymarket seemed to take the audience by surprise. The cutting brilliancy of “the nice derangement of epitaphs” fell somewhat flat; *per contra*, the Ibsenish tendency of the sombre story affected them deeply. The conventional idea that women who are sinners must suffer is well understood; but that men should suffer too, that the sympathy of the son and his innocent young bride should be with the woman, that was a new view of the matter which puzzled and displeased. Men's brows were puckered, men's hands twitched, they fidgeted. Is the era of woman's equality really at hand, is the dawn of their supremacy really on the horizon? The hardened male reprobate who, having tasted and tired of all life's pleasures, feels lonely in loveless isolation and wants his son, the son of the woman he has despised and cast off—this did not seem natural, and yet, perhaps, after all, was there something in it? Innumerable subtle touches of nature suggested new trains of thought. The boy who, after hearing his mother's sad story, says, “But, mother, you know, she could not have been a really nice girl.” The *blasé* man of the world, who remarks to the woman, after she has rejected him, “I believe you loved me more than any one else ever did.” The man's gratified vanity at the affection he has so persistently despised, the delicately-suggested birth of his respect for her when he pulls out his cigarette-case in her presence, and, finally, after a moment's hesitation, puts it back again in his pocket, the half sad, half insolently jaunty, half baffled mode of his exit—all these were immensely piquant and effective. Still, on the whole, the men did not like it, and in that they were justified. It would never do for the weaker sex to realise that there would be an equality of justice for both sexes, and that men's rights are no longer women's wrongs.

Concerning "An Ideal Husband" the latest *on dit* is too good to forget before committing it to a sketchy immortality. Going the way of all play-acting manuscripts, accepted or otherwise, the "Husband" was sent by post to its author for a pruning that would fit in with Haymarket exigencies. Recognising the inevitable with sentiments that still approached a sigh, Oscar the Ostensible waved a violet-tipped cigarette in the air, and said, with a speechless air: "Who am I that I should mutilate a masterpiece?" There wasn't a dry eye in the company.

## THE DRAMA OF THE WEEK.

"LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN" AT THE ST. JAMES'S THEATRE.

MR. OSCAR WILDE'S play belongs to the school of which *The Red Lamp* is a conspicuous example. It is, like *The Red Lamp*, a play which owes its title and its theme to a piece of domestic furniture. In the one piece the fortunes of a Russian Princess depended upon the position of a lamp as scarlet as the cry of Montanaro's passionate parrot. In the other piece the fortunes of an Englishwoman depend upon the proprietorship of a fan as white as Lady Windermere's fortuitous innocence. As a rule, plays built up round some inanimate object are rather boring; but that could not be said of *The Red Lamp* or of *Lady Windermere's Fan*. On the contrary both are very amusing plays. Mr. Wilde's pictures of exalted London life are as faithful as Mr. Tristram's studies of St. Petersburg society; if Mr. Tristram was more adventurous, Mr. Wilde is more epigrammatic. Indeed, it is obvious that Mr. Wilde regards a play as a vehicle merely for the expression of epigram and the promulgation of paradox. *Lady Windermere's Fan* is not really a play; it is a pepper-box of paradoxes. The piece is improbable without being interesting. It is a not too ingenious blend of the *Eden* of Mr. Edgar Saltus, with *The Idler* of Mr. Haddon Chambers, and the *Francillon* of Alexander Dumas the Younger. Its people act in an unnatural manner without arousing sympathy or hostility by their actions. The situations are weatherworn. But the paradox is the thing, not the play. The Great God Paradox has his impassioned prophet in Mr. Wilde and all Mr. Wilde's puppets chant his litany. It has a quaint effect to find, in this Cloud-Cuckoo-Town of Mr. Wilde's, all its inhabitants equally cynical, equally paradoxical, equally epigrammatic. Were the trick to become too stale it might prove tiresome, for it is, after all, but a question of inverted vocabulary. Mr. Wilde's figures talk a Back Slang of their own; once accept the conditions of the game, and the fantastic becomes the familiar. Black is white, day is night; well and good, by all means. But what next? While it is fresh, however, this kind of fantasy is exceedingly diverting; and its humours are interpreted at the St. James's after a fashion which must surely temper Mr. Wilde's disdain for actors. Miss Marion Terry played a part wholly new to her artistic experience with great skill, and with a grace that made the beholder forget how skilful the performance was in sheer enjoyment of its charm. Mr. Alexander,



MRS. ERLYNNE (MISS MARION TERRY) ENTREATING LADY WINDERMERE (MISS LILY HANBURY) TO RETURN TO HER HUSBAND

having modestly chosen a small part, made no false effort to play it into a big part. It was, from first to last firmly restrained within its due proportions. Mr. Nutcombe Gould had little opportunity as a peer of laboured profligacy. Mr. Ben Webster played a specimen of the Up To Date young man with rare distinction, exquisite foppishness, exquisite insolence. It was quite the best thing he has done, quite the best thing of its kind I have seen for long enough.

# THE DRAMA OF THE DAY



“AN IDEAL HUSBAND,”

AT THE

HAYMARKET

THEATRE.

*This Supplement, pages I to VIII, may be detached if desired.*

"AN IDEAL HUSBAND," AT THE HAYMARKET THEATRE.



LADY CHILTERN (MISS JULIA NEILSON).

"What gain would you get — Money?"

Mr. Oscar Wilde's play, despite some unkind remarks of the critics, seems to have caught the taste of the public. In fact, the author has shown a skill in pleasing those whom he professes to despise which suggests the existence of a fellow-feeling between him and the middle classes that must be surprising and painful to him. The great uncultured has enjoyed Mr. Wilde's ornate imitation of Scribe as completely as its author, and everyone, from Balham to Belgravia, is going to see the strangely unlife-like story of Sir Robert Chiltern and the stolen bracelet. It is indeed fortunate that, in matters dramatic, Mr. Wilde is a man of no importance, or the theatres might be deluged with efforts of the untrained to copy the method of the skilful play-jugglers, Sardou and his master Scribe. However, one must give the author his due, and admit that he has succeeded in writing a capital part for the brilliant comedian Mr. Charles Hawtrey, and in providing the popular young managers, Messrs. Lewis Waller and H. H. Morell, with a play likely to fill the theatre, until Mr. Beerbohm Tree's return, with people who will be delighted by a work that hits to perfection the taste of the British Philistine. The following is the cast—

The Earl of Caversham ... ..	MR. ALFRED BISHOP.
Lord Goring ... ..	MR. CHARLES H. HAWTREY.
Sir Robert Chiltern ... ..	MR. LEWIS WALLER.
Vicomte de Nanjac ... ..	MR. COSMO STUART.
Mr. Montford ... ..	MR. HENRY STANFORD.
Phipps ... ..	MR. C. H. BROOKFIELD.
Mason ... ..	MR. H. DEANE.
Footman ... ..	MR. CHARLES MEYRICK.
Footman ... ..	MR. GOODHART.
Lady Chiltern ... ..	MISS JULIA NEILSON.
Lady Markby ... ..	MISS FANNY BROUGH.
Lady Basildon ... ..	MISS VANE FEATHERSTON.
Mrs. Marchmont ... ..	MISS HELEN FORSYTH.
Miss Mabel Chiltern ... ..	MISS MAUDE MILLETT.
Mrs. Cheveley ... ..	MISS FLORENCE WEST.



LORD GORING (MR. CHARLES HAWTREY), AND MISS MABEL CHILTERN.

LORD GORING: "It's a public scandal the way I adore you."



SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (MR. LEWIS WALLER) AND LORD GORING.

LORD GORING: "You thought you had won, Robert!"

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALFRED ELLIS, UPPER BAKER STREET, N.W.



MISS CHILTERN (MISS MAUDE MILLETT).

*"I wouldn't marry a man with a future."*



LADY BASILDON (MISS VANE FEATHERSTON), AND MRS. MARCHMONT.

*"What martyrs we are, dear Margaret!"*



LORD GORING AND MISS CHILTERN.

*"I wonder who dropped it?"*



SIR ROBERT AND LADY CHILTERN.

*"Write the word 'dishonest.'"*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALFRED ELLIS, UPPER BAKER STREET, N.W.



MISS JULIA NEILSON AS LADY CHILTERN.

*"What has my husband to do with a woman like you?"*

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY HANA, STRAND.



LADY BASILDON AND MRS. MARCHMONT (MISS FORSYTH).

*"What did your man talk about?"*



SIR ROBERT AND LADY CHILTERN.

SIR ROBERT: *"Must I write and tell her that?"*



SIR ROBERT AND LADY CHILTERN.

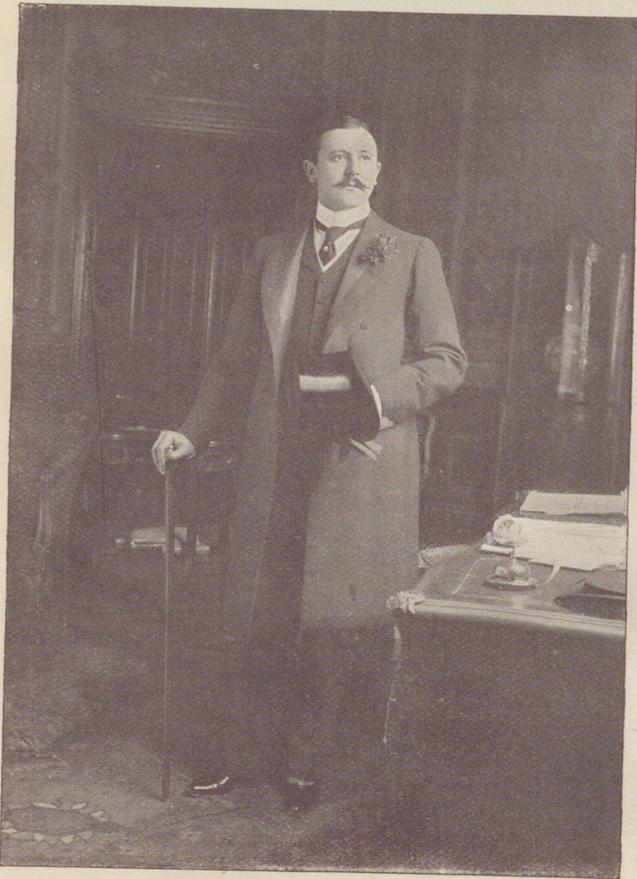
SIR ROBERT: *"Love me always, Gertrude! Love me always!"*



LORD GORING AND LORD CAVERSHAM (MR. ALFRED BISHOP).

LORD CAVERSHAM: *"Have you read 'The Times' this morning?"*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALFRED ELLIS, UPPER BAKER STREET, N.W.



LORD GORING.

*"Every man of ambition has to fight his century with its own weapons."*



LADY CHILTERN.

*"And yet you will not lie to me!"*



LORD GORING AND PHIPPS (MR. BROOKFIELD).

*"I don't observe any alteration in your Lordship's appearance."*



VICOMTE DE NANJAC (MR. COSMO STUART), AND LADY BASILDON.

*"I'm quite English in all my tastes."*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALFRED ELLIS, UPPER BAKER STREET, N.W.



MISS FLORENCE WEST AS MRS. CHEVELEY.

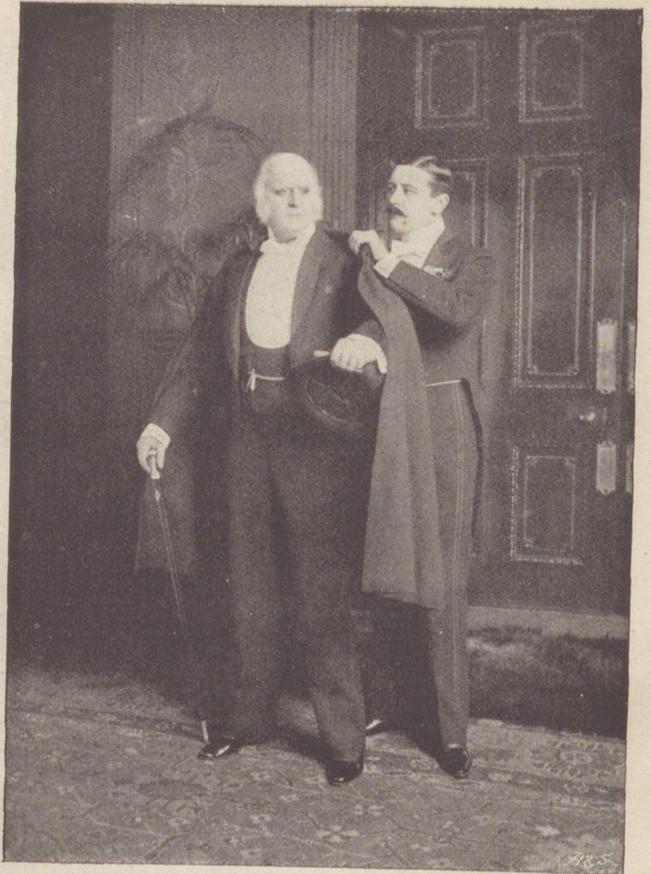
*"I've a perfect passion for listening through keyholes. One always hears such wonderful things!"*

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY HANA, STRAND.



MRS. MARCHMONT AND LADY BASILDON.

*"How well it becomes us, Olivia!"*



LORD CAVERSHAM AND LORD GORING.

LORD CAVERSHAM: *"Put down my cloak, Sir!"*



SIR ROBERT CHILTERN, LORD GORING, AND LADY CHILTERN.

SIR ROBERT: *"Gertrude, here is my letter of resignation."*



THE VICOMTE, LADY BASILDON, MRS. MARCHMONT, AND MR. MONTFORD (MR. STANFORD).

THE VICOMTE: *"Will you have some supper?"*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALFRED ELLIS, UPPER BAKER STREET, N.W.

## THE DRAMA.

## "A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE."

THERE is a word of frequent occurrence in the vocabulary of English Podsnappery which it is customary to apply to any play of Mr. Oscar Wilde's, or to any book of Mr. Oscar Wilde's, or, indeed, to anything that is his. It is the word "un-English." Many quite worthy people will, probably, have already tacked this adjective to his new Haymarket piece, *A Woman of No Importance*, and if to be bright and witty, audacious and paradoxical, is to be un-English, then the epithet befits the play. Yet witty allusion, barbed epigram, cut-and-thrust repartee, were not always un-English, for was not Congreve a true-born Englishman? Another name comes naturally to the point of the pen, the name of Sheridan. Unfortunately for the illustration, Sheridan, though an English classic, was not an Englishman; he was an Irishman—and so, by the way, is Mr. Oscar Wilde. It is quite fitting then, that Mr. Wilde should revive the Sheridanian tradition, and restore the pleasure of brilliant conversation to a stage from which it has been too long absent. The only objection that need be made is that Mr. Wilde's zeal in this direction has been somewhat excessive. Sheridan's clever talk is never, as Mr. Wilde's too frequently is, talk in the air; it is always dramatic, it helps on the play, it illustrates character. With Mr. Wilde the talk is often an end in itself, it has no vital connection with the particular play of which it forms a part, it might

woman, lovely woman." Lord Illingworth is always giving us woman—in a definition. "Women represent the triumph of matter over mind—just as men represent the triumph of mind over morals." There are only two sorts of women in society—"the plain and the coloured." The excessive complacency with which Lord Illingworth reels off these definitions of the sex verges perilously on the fatuous. In real life it is not the ripe man-of-the-world who is full of shallow philosophising at the expense of the sex, but the stripling undergraduate. And here you see what I mean by the statement that Mr. Wilde's talk is essentially undramatic. Lord Illingworth is presented to us as an accomplished worldling, at once a statesman and an arbiter of taste in the fashionable world. Now, such a man would never be so fond, in actual life, of the sound of his own voice, and he would be much more chary of his epigrams; he would leave them to mere literary persons and other unfashionables. Your true *grand seigneur* cannot condescend to be as talkative as a professional diner-out. But, unreal as Lord Illingworth is, he is vastly amusing. In the man who can define a foxhunter as "the unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable" much may be forgiven.

The purpose of Mr. Wilde's play—if Mr. Wilde will plead guilty to anything so commonplace as a purpose—is to "show up" this heartless libertine, and to turn the tables on him. The man discovers that his private secretary is his own son by a woman whom he has betrayed and long since forgotten, as



HESTER WORSLEY (Miss Julia Neilson)

GERALD ARBUTHNOT (Mr. Fred Terry)

MRS. ARBUTHNOT (Mrs. Bernard Beere)

LORD ILLINGWORTH (Mr. Beerbohm Tree)

## SCENE FROM MR. OSCAR WILDE'S NEW PLAY, "A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE" AT THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

as well be put into the mouth of one character as of another. He is too prone to range all his personages in a semi-circle (like the occupants of Célimène's drawing-room in *Les Femmes Savantes*), and to set them for a whole quarter-of-an-hour popping off epigrams about things in general, while the piece stands still, and our interest in it—as a piece—grows cold. When the supply of epigram is momentarily exhausted, the play is resumed. This method—the method by which a layer of talk is alternated with a layer of action—is excellent for making sandwiches, not quite so excellent for making plays. When Mr. Wilde has learned to weave the warp of his wit into the woof of his story, or, to use a better figure, when he has learned to make the one spring spontaneously out of the other, instead of being a mere parasitic growth attached to it—why then he will be a very considerable dramatist, and everything will be for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

Meanwhile, it has to be admitted that his wit is often of so first-rate a quality that one willingly pardons its dramatic irrelevance. It is, perhaps, too good to be always original. The definition, for instance, of duty as "that which we expect from others," belongs of right, I think, to M. Alexandre Dumas *filis*. Sometimes Mr. Wilde does not hesitate to pilfer from his own earlier self, as in the definition of women as "sphinxes without secrets." This, by the way, is only one of Lord Illingworth's innumerable definitions of woman. My Lord Illingworth reminds me of the bagman in "Pickwick," who was always proposing a toast to the sex: "Gents, I give you

"of no importance." On the discovery being made, what passes with him for paternal sentiment begins to work; he likes the lad, likes to think that he can be of use to the lad, that while the woman can do nothing for the lad, he can do everything. And so the poor mother sees her boy, the one compensation she had for her shame, drawn away from her side by the very man by whom her shame was caused. There seems a fiendish injustice in this—but the reckoning is at hand. I use the phrase sacred to melodrama, because the device by which the crisis of the play is brought about is somewhat melodramatic. The son finds my lord insulting the girl whom he, the son, secretly adores. Up goes his clenched fist until stopped by the mother's cry—"hold, he is your father." Thereafter the son's efforts are directed to compelling his father to make "reparation" to his mother by marriage. But as the mother very sensibly (though rather too lengthily) points out, marriage with a man who has betrayed and deserted her would be a very poor sort of reparation; and, backed up by the boy's sweetheart—a Puritan maiden from New England—she steadfastly puts aside this solution of the difficulty as no solution at all. It is when the offer of marriage comes spontaneously from the seducer himself (he has twinges of repentance, and wishes to be able to recognise his son) that the woman's triumph comes. She treats his offer with such contempt that he is stung to words of low insult, she strikes him across the face with his glove, and he slinks from her presence, a pitiful creature, "a man," as she says, "of no importance."

THE PLAY.

A SERIES of important post-Christmas novelties led off at the Garrick with the production of *Slaves of the Ring* and concluded at the St. James's with



SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (Mr. Lewis Waller) MRS. CHEVELEY (Miss Florence West)

AN IDEAL HUSBAND—ACT I.

that of *Guy Domville*. Mr. Sydney Grundy, Mr. Oscar Wilde and Mr. Henry James have in turn appealed to the public, their respective efforts having been presented by three of the most spirited, capable and artistic of



LORD GORING (Mr. Charles H. Hawtreay) MRS. CHEVELEY (Miss Florence West)

AN IDEAL HUSBAND—ACT IV.

managements. The high expectations formed by many have, however, been defeated; the most prosperous of the London managements has met with a rebuff, if not a reverse, and in the other cases nothing more solid or definite has been reaped than a *succès d'estime*. The pieces are all, indeed, flimsy, unconvincing and, to some extent, incoherent. In *Slaves of the Ring* Mr. Grundy has chosen for satire a subject which inspired Thackeray, in "The Newcomes," as well as many earlier and subsequent writers in other books. Two girls, sisters, espouse at maternal bidding suitors young and eligible. The maternal fiat has gone forth, and tears and despair are powerless to arrest the mandate. The wrong people are, however, married, since Ruth Egerton loves madly Harold Dundas, by whom her sister is led to the altar, and is loved by him with equal fervour. Afterwards, when finding the situation intolerable, Harold goes off to Africa and is reported dead, it is his sister-in-law and not his wife whom the news strikes to the heart. From the ravings of Ruth, Helen, her sister, surprises her secret while herself nursing her so that no one else may learn of the disgrace that has fallen on them, and substitutes for her love for her sister a resentment rapidly developing into hatred. Harold, who is not killed, returns, and love passages between him and Ruth are surprised by Helen, who openly proclaims their infamy. Here the play concludes. When one of the characters representing unconsciously the audience, asks what will be the end, another character, who personates a sort of chorus, responds, "There will be no end." Art is thus, Mr. Grundy holds, as unquestionable and as relentless as life. The representation was marked by the level excellence of



SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (Mr. Lewis Waller) MRS. CHEVELEY (Miss Florence West) LADY CHILTERN (Miss Julia Neilson)

AN IDEAL HUSBAND—ACT III.

a cast comprising Messrs. Bouchier, and Brandon Thomas, and Misses Kate Rorke, Calhoun, and Kate Phillips, and by a marvellous presentation by Mr. Hare of aristocratic senility, perhaps the very finest picture yet seen in Mr. Hare's gallery.

In his four-act play, sub-ironically styled *An Ideal Husband*, Mr. Wilde starts with a serious purpose which he speedily abandons, of showing how remorselessly and inevitably Nemesis dogs and treads down the offender. Riding on the flood-tide of fortune into distinction and success, Sir Robert Chiltern, now Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and on the point of obtaining Cabinet rank, finds himself suddenly and unexpectedly menaced with shipwreck, for his prosperous fortunes are the reward of an act of early treachery. While private secretary to an eminent statesman he has sold to a foreign financier a Cabinet secret. The letter in which he has made the shameful revelation has now come into the hands of a woman, who, as the price of yielding it up insists on his championing a financial scheme, which it is his duty to oppose and hold up to public execration. Should he decline she will send the compromising document to the Press and his career is at an end. After some vacillation he finds himself cornered, and reluctantly consents to do as he is bidden. Here we reach a psychological and dramatic stage. Nothing, however, comes. Instead of facing the difficulty, Mr. Wilde, so to speak, masks it and leaves it behind. His bad woman does nothing. Why? She is maladroit enough to lose a diamond brooch which she has stolen, and thus delivers herself, bound and powerless, into the hands of a man who is her enemy and Sir Robert's agent and ally. Nothing now remains for her except to yield up the letter as the price of her own immunity from punishment. Sir Robert thus, after a good fight, retains his privileges, his honours, and his good name and Nemesis proves to be a bogey, a turnip's head with a light

inside. The play is superbly mounted and well played by Messrs. Waller, Bishop and Hawtreay, and Misses Julia Neilson, Brough, Frithurst, Millist, Foyth and Florence West.

NOTES FROM THE THEATRES.

Messrs. Waller and Morell are going to try a novel experiment, in giving a *matinée* at five o'clock. Next Tuesday "An Ideal Husband" will be played at this hour, and will terminate at 7.30. The management are of opinion that there are a large number of City men living in the suburbs to whom this hour will be a convenience.

132

"THE FIRST STEP."

So far as I know, "The First Step" is the first step taken by Mr. William Heinemann in the path of play-writing, and I hope it will not be the last. No doubt he will be discouraged by the fact that some of the critics have fallen foul of it, and unpleasantly surprised to find that it has been prohibited; but some will see in it, as I do, strong evidence of dramatic instinct. It may be admitted that, as it stands, "The First Step," if actually put on the stage, would be a *premier pas qui coûte*, for there is want of tact—perhaps one should say technique—in the way in which the work is handled. A series of long speeches and soliloquies, in which, rightly, no effort is made to reach absolute beauty of word or idea, but only to attain fitness, would never please the British public, nor even that more patient people, the French.

Lizzie, too, as a picture of the lower-middle-class girl who so longs for the sunshine of life, because she has been shut up for years in a gloomy religious home, that she becomes reckless, is very solidly drawn, and has some fine touches of character. It may be that there is a needless obscurity about the attitude of Frank, but it is hard to say whether some of it would not disappear in actual stage presentation. It will be noticed that the author has carefully sought to give a real conversational style to his dialogue, and in some instances has caught phrases that are highly and nicely characteristic. Possibly, some will suggest that a girl who says "You beast!" when she is kissed by a man with whom she is flirting violently, is rather more vulgar in style than is necessary. However, this raises a difficult question; probably, the author takes the view that the lower one gets in the classes, the less complex become the emotions, and therefore the more easy to represent forcibly. After all, Lizzie is not more vulgar in feeling than some of the "nobility and gentry" in the plays of Mr. Oscar Wilde. The prohibition of a work which, while avoiding indelicate details, paints a grim, almost repulsive, and decidedly deterrent picture of irregular sex relations, is an absurd abuse of power, and suggests that there is some truth in the rumour that Mr. Pigott has received orders from an exalted being, who does nothing for our drama, to "burke" all pieces that deal with the serious problems of life—truthfully.

\* "The First Step." London: John Lane and Co., Vigo Street.

FEBRUARY 16, 1895

THE PLAY.

Questioned as to the merits of his newest production, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, at the St. James's, Mr. Oscar Wilde is reported to have said "the first act is ingenious, the second beautiful, the third abominably clever."

The five o'clock *matinée* at the Haymarket, which will be given as an experiment on the 19th, deserves publicity and success as an attempt to find a groove, find out what the public hardly knows that it wants provide for it. It is to be hoped that city men and dwellers in the suburbs, for whom the new venture is primarily intended, will show their appreciation, and that the players will not find the strain too great. It will for them five hours' work with a very short break for rest and amusement, for their audience it will mean *An Ideal Husband* between oon tea and dinner.

240

FEBRUARY 23, 1895

THE PLAY.

NEVER, perhaps, in the records of the drama has a joke at once so colossal and so frivolous as Mr. Oscar Wilde's new play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, been perpetrated on the stage. Its title is a pun, its story a conundrum, its characters are lunatics, its dialogue is galimatias, and its termination is a "sell." It kept, none the less, the St. James's audience simmering with delight, and it will probably count among the chief attractions of the approaching season. Something akin to what is now done had been previously accomplished by Mr. Gilbert in a series of pieces culminating in the Haymarket extravaganza of *Engaged*. Mr. Wilde has, however, fairly distanced his predecessor, and has given to the St. James's a piece that never for a moment "deviates into sense," or sanity. As to supplying an insight into the meaning, you might as well—

"Hunt half a day for a forgotten dream." John Worthing, J.P., leads a double life. In the country, where he resides in a well-appointed house with a pretty, sentimental and wealthy ward, he is a model of propriety, a pillar of Church and State, a representative country gentleman. In London he is—well—other. To justify his frequent visits to town he has invented a *roué* brother named Ernest whose unruly proceedings and moral delinquencies necessitate his constant interference. This wholly supposititious personage he has painted in colours so attractive to a young, dreaming and innocent girl, that Cecily, his ward, has fallen over head and ears in love with him. What then is her delight when Ernest appears in the shape of a good-looking and amorous scape-grace who makes desperate love to her before he has been in her company five minutes. This supposed and self-proclaimed Ernest is, in fact, Algernon Moncrieffe, a dissipated young town acquaintance of Worthing, a genuine importation from Restoration comedy, who, hearing of the existence of a pretty, modest and secluded heiress has ridden down post-haste and incognito, to win her. By an ill chance, the moment he has chosen to personate John Worthing's brother is that in which Worthing himself has determined to get out of this burdensome, though imaginary double. Worthing has proposed to and been accepted by Gwendolen Fairfax, who, however, knows him only as Ernest, not as John. Proposing men to get married and abandon all outlandish follies he determines to sacrifice his putative brother. Donning, accordingly, a suit of mere black he goes home to make a tearful announcement that poor Ernest has died in Paris. The shock of these tidings are calculated to cause a somewhat modified knowledge of Ernest is at present moment Cecily in the

drawing-room alive and kissing, if not kicking. This genuinely comic farcical situation is productive of inextinguishable amusement. Its mirth provoking power is, however, eclipsed by that which follows when Gwendolen Fairfax comes down to visit and make friends with the ward of her future husband. At first the prettiest advances are made and accepted, and the most tender embraces are lavished by the maidens on each other. After a time, however, the name of Ernest Worthing comes up. Each lady, though there is no such person, believes herself to be engaged to him, and each sniffs in the other a rival. Out come delicately the sharp claws from the soft velvety sheaths, the purr of affection develops through what is almost a swear into what is quite a spit, and at length two cats stand prepared for battle. With the

appearance of the lovers comes the certitude that they are not rivals, with the accompanying revelation that they have both been befooled. Neither of them is betrothed to Ernest Worthing since Ernest Worthing does not exist. As in the case of Mrs. Harris, of immortal fame, there is "no sich person." Now, the possession of the name of Ernest is an indispensable condition of retaining the love of the heroines, whose arms once more interlace as they stand in combined resistance to the wiles and subterfuges of that monster man. Each of the pair is willing to be

re-christened, but this proposal is rejected as mere casuistry. It is equally difficult and superfluous to tell the means by which difficulties are at length overcome and John is proven to be in very fact, Ernest. All that happens is extravagant, ridiculous, titile and inconceivably amusing. The language is thoroughly attuned to the story. The characters vie with each other in perverting or misapplying current sayings. Thus in the phrase "Marriages are made in Heaven," Mr. Wilde substitutes for marriages divorces. One character asks what is the good of the lower classes unless they set us a good example.

Mr. Wilde, however, is fortunate in all respects. He has found a management that mounts his play as though it were a masterpiece, has secured the very best of interpretation, and he has at his back a public that never ceases to laugh at his extravagances. Mr. Alexander plays the hero with an air of conviction and sincerity that is almost plaintive and quite excellent throughout. Mr. Aynesworth catches the exact note of his more ebullient and volatile friend. Misses Irene Vanbrugh and Evelyn Millard deal with the two heroines in delightful fashion, and Miss Rose Leclercq has quite the grand style in what Brantôme calls *une grande dame de par le monde*. A small part of a servant was capably played by Mr. Kinsey Peile.

THE PLAY.

A SERIES of important post-Christmas novelties led off at the Garrick with the production of *Slaves of the Ring* and concluded at the St. James's with



SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (Mr. Lewis Waller) MRS. CHEVELEY (Miss Florence West) AN IDEAL HUSBAND—ACT I.

that of *Guy Domville*. Mr. Sydney Grundy, Mr. Oscar Wilde and Mr. Henry James have in turn appealed to the public, their respective efforts having been presented by three of the most spirited, capable and artistic of



LORD GORING (Mr. Charles H. Hawtrej) MRS. CHEVELEY (Miss Florence West) AN IDEAL HUSBAND—ACT IV.

managements. The high expectations formed by many have, however, been defeated; the most prosperous of the London managements has met with rebuff, if not a reverse, and in the other cases nothing much more solid definite has been reaped than a *succès d'estime*. The pieces are all, indeed, flimsy, unconvincing and, to some extent, incoherent. In *Slaves of the Ring* Mr. Grundy has chosen for satire a subject which inspired Thackeray, in "The Newcomes," as well as many earlier and subsequent writers in other books. Two girls, sisters, espouse at maternal bidding suitors young and eligible. The maternal fiat has gone forth, and tears and despair are powerless to arrest the mandate. The wrong people are, however, married, since Ruth Egerton lovingly Harold Dundas, by whom her sister is led to the altar, and is loved by him with equal fervour. Afterwards, when finding the situation intolerable, Harold goes off to Africa and is reported dead, it is his sister-in-law and not his whom the news strikes to the heart. From the ravings of Ruth, Helen, his sister, surprises her secret while herself nursing her so that no one else may learn of the disgrace that has fallen on them, and substitutes for her love her sister a resentment rapidly developing into hatred. Harold, who is not killed, returns, and love passages between him and Ruth are surprised. Helen, who openly proclaims their infamy. Here the play concludes. When one of the characters representing unconsciously the audience, asks what will be the end, another character, who personates a sort of chorus, responds, "The will be no end." Art is thus, Mr. Grundy holds, as unquestionable and relentless as life. The representation was marked by the level excellence



SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (Mr. Lewis Waller) MRS. CHEVELEY (Miss Florence West) LADY CHILTERN (Miss Julia Neilson) AN IDEAL HUSBAND—ACT III.

a cast comprising Messrs. Bouchier, and Brandon Thomas, and Misses K. Korke, Calhoun, and Kate Phillips, and by a marvellous presentation by M. Hare of aristocratic senility, perhaps the very finest picture yet seen in M. Hare's gallery.

In his four-act play, sub-ironically styled *An Ideal Husband*, Mr. Wilde starts with a serious purpose which he speedily abandons, of showing her remorselessly and inevitably Nemesis dogs and treads down the offender. Riding on the flood-tide of fortune into distinction and success, Sir Robert Chiltern, now Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and on the point of obtaining Cabinet rank, finds himself suddenly and unexpectedly menaced with shipwreck, for his prosperous fortunes are the reward of an act of treachery. While private secretary to an eminent statesman he has sold to a foreign financier a Cabinet secret. The letter in which he has made this shameful revelation has now come into the hands of a woman, who, as the price of yielding it up insists on his championing a financial scheme, which is his duty to oppose and hold up to public execration. Should he decline to send the compromising document to the Press and his career is at an end. After some vacillation he finds himself cornered, and reluctantly consents to do as he is bidden. Here we reach a psychological and dramatic stage. Nothing, however, comes. Instead of facing the difficulty, Mr. Wilde, so to speak, masks it and leaves it behind. His bad woman does nothing. She is maladroit enough to lose a diamond brooch which she has stolen, and thus delivers herself, bound and powerless, into the hands of a man who is her enemy and Sir Robert's agent and ally. Nothing now remains for her except to yield up the letter as the price of her own immunity from punishment. Sir Robert thus, after a good fright, retains his privileges, his honours, and his good name and Nemesis proves to be a bogey, a turnip's head with a lig

inside. The play is superbly mounted and well played by Messrs. Waller, Bishop and Hawtrej, and Misses Julia Neilson, Brough, Featherston, Mallett, Foyth and Florence West.

THE PLAY.

Questioned as to the merits of his newest production, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, at the St. James's, Mr. Oscar Wilde is reported to have said "the first act is ingenious, the second beautiful, the third abominably clever." The five o'clock *matinée* at the Haymarket, which will be given as an experiment on the 19th, deserves publicity and success as an attempt to emerge from a groove, find out what the public hardly knows that it wants and provide for it. It is to be hoped that city men and dwellers in the suburbs, for whom the new venture is primarily intended, will show their appreciation, and that the players will not find the strain too great. It will mean for them five hours' work with a very short break for rest and refreshment, for their audience it will mean *An Ideal Husband* between afternoon tea and dinner.

THE PLAY.

NEVER, perhaps, in the records of the drama has a joke at once so colossal and so frivolous as Mr. Oscar Wilde's new play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, been perpetrated on the stage. Its title is a pun, its story a conundrum, its characters are lunatics, its dialogue is galimatias, and its termination is a "sell." It kept, none the less, the St. James's audience simmering with delight, and it will probably count among the chief attractions of the approaching season. Something akin to what is now done had been previously accomplished by Mr. Gilbert in a series of pieces culminating in the Haymarket extravaganza of *Engaged*. Mr. Wilde has, however, fairly distanced his predecessor, and has given to the St. James's a piece that never for a moment "deviates into sense," or sanity. As to supplying an insight into the meaning, you might as well— "Hunt half a day for a forgotten dream."

John Worthing, J.P., leads a double life. In the country, where he resides in a well-appointed house with a pretty, sentimental and wealthy ward, he is a model of propriety, a pillar of Church and State, a representative country gentleman. In London he is—well—other. To justify his frequent visits to town he has invented a *roué* brother named Ernest whose unruly proceedings and moral delinquencies necessitate his constant interference. This wholly supposititious personage he has painted in colours so attractive to a young, dreaming and innocent girl, that Cecily, his ward, has fallen over head and ears in love with him. What then is her delight when Ernest appears in the shape of a good-looking and amorous scape-grace who makes desperate love to her before he has been in her company five minutes. This supposed and self-proclaimed Ernest is, in fact, Algernon Moncrieffe, a dissipated young town acquaintance of Worthing, a genuine importation from Restoration comedy, who, hearing of the existence of a pretty, modest and secluded heiress has ridden down post-haste and incognito, to win her. By an ill chance, the moment he has chosen to personate John Worthing's brother is that in which Worthing himself has determined to get out of this burdensome, though imaginary double. Worthing has proposed to and been accepted by Gwendolen Fairfax, who, however, knows him only as Ernest, not as John. Proposing then to get married and abandon all youthful follies he determines to sacrifice his putative brother. Donning, accordingly, a suit of funeral black he goes home to make the tearful announcement that poor Ernest has died in Paris. The shock these tidings are calculated to cause is somewhat modified by the knowledge that Ernest is at the present moment with Cecily in the

drawing-room alive and kissing, it not kicking. This genuinely comic farcical situation is productive of inextinguishable amusement. Its mirth provoking power is, however, eclipsed by that which follows when Gwendolen Fairfax comes down to visit and make friends with the ward of her future husband. At first the prettiest advances are made and accepted, and the most tender embraces are lavished by the maidens on each other. After a time, however, the name of Ernest Worthing comes up. Each lady, though there is no such person, believes herself to be engaged to him, and each sniffs in the other a rival. Out come delicately the sharp claws from the soft velvety sheaths, the purr of affection develops through what is almost a swear into what is quite a spit, and at length two cats stand prepared for battle. With the

appearance of the lovers comes the certitude that they are not rivals, with the accompanying revelation that they have both been befooled. Neither of them is betrothed to Ernest Worthing since Ernest Worthing does not exist. As in the case of Mrs. Harris, of immortal fame, there is "no sich person." Now, the possession of the name of Ernest is an indispensable condition of retaining the love of the heroines, whose arms once more interlace as they stand in combined resistance to the wiles and subterfuges of that monster man. Each of the pair is willing to be

Evelyn Millard dealt with the two heroines in delightful fashion, and Miss Rose Leclercq has quite the grand style in what Brantôme calls *une grande dame de par le monde*. A small part of a servant was capably played by Mr. Kinsey Peile.

NOTES FROM THE THEATRES.

Messrs. Waller and Morell are going to try a novel experiment, in giving a *matinée* at five o'clock. Next Tuesday "An Ideal Husband" will be played at this hour, and will terminate at 7.30. The management are of opinion that there are a large number of City men living in the suburbs to whom this hour will be a convenience.

"THE FIRST STEP."

So far as I know, "The First Step" is the first step taken by Mr. William Heinemann in the path of play-writing, and I hope it will not be the last. No doubt he will be discouraged by the fact that some of the critics have fallen foul of it, and unpleasantly surprised to find that it has been prohibited: but some will see in it, as I do, strong evidence of dramatic instinct. It may be admitted that, as it stands, "The First Step," if actually put on the stage, would be a *premier pas qui coûte*, for there is want of tact—perhaps one should say technique—in the way in which the work is handled. A series of long speeches and soliloquies, in which, rightly, no effort is made to reach absolute beauty of word or idea, but only to attain fitness, would never please the British public, nor even that more patient people, the French.

Lizzie, too, as a picture of the lower-middle-class girl who so longs for the sunshine of life, because she has been shut up for years in a gloomy religious home, that she becomes reckless, is very solidly drawn, and has some fine touches of character. It may be that there is a needless obscurity about the attitude of Frank, but it is hard to say whether some of it would not disappear in actual stage presentation. It will be noticed that the author has carefully sought to give a real conversational style to

Westminster Gazette. 12 May 1900

Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Waller have some idea of reviving that brilliant comedy "A Woman of No Importance" at a series of *matinées* in London. Arrangements so far have not been completed, but should the piece be given, several very accomplished players will be invited to take part in its performance.

his dialogue, and in some instances has caught phrases that are highly and nicely characteristic. Possibly, some will suggest that a girl who says "You beast!" when she is kissed by a man with whom she is flirting violently, is rather more vulgar in style than is necessary. However, this raises a difficult question; probably, the author takes the view that the lower one gets in the classes, the less complex become the emotions, and therefore the more easy to represent forcibly. After all, Lizzie is not more vulgar in feeling than some of the "nobility and gentry" in the plays of Mr. Oscar Wilde. The prohibition of a work which, while avoiding indelicate details, paints a grim, almost repulsive, and decidedly deterrent picture of irregular sex relations, is an absurd abuse of power, and suggests that there is some truth in the rumour that Mr. Pigott has received orders from an exalted being, who does nothing for our drama, to "burke" all pieces that deal with the serious problems of life—truthfully. MONOCLE.

\* "The First Step." London: John Lane and Co., Vigo Street.

re-christened, but this proposal is rejected as mere casuistry. It is equally difficult and superfluous to tell the means by which difficulties are at length overcome and John is proven to be in very fact, Ernest. All that happens is extravagant, ridiculous, futile and inconceivably amusing. The language is thoroughly attuned to the story. The characters vie with each other in perverting or misapplying current sayings. Thus in the phrase "Marriages are made in Heaven," Mr. Wilde substitutes for marriages divorces. One character asks what is the good of the lower classes unless they set us a good example.

Mr. Wilde, however, is fortunate in all respects. He has found a management that mounts his play as though it were a masterpiece, has secured the very best of interpretation, and he has at his back a public that never ceases to laugh at his extravagances. Mr. Alexander plays the hero with an air of conviction and sincerity that is almost plaintive and quite excellent throughout. Mr. Aynesworth catches the exact note of his more ebullient and volatile friend. Misses Irene Vanbrugh and

THE PLAY.

A SERIES of important post-Christmas novelties led off at the Garrick with the production of *Slaves of the Ring* and concluded at the St. James's with

managements. The high expectations formed by many have, however, been defeated; the most prosperous of the London managements has met with a rebuff, if not a reverse, and in the other cases nothing much more solid or definite has been reaped than a *succès d'estime*. The pieces are all, indeed, flimsy, unconvincing and, to some extent, incoherent. In *Slaves of the Ring* Mr. Grundy has chosen for satire a subject which inspired Thackeray, in "The Newcomes," as well as many earlier and subsequent writers in other books. Two girls, sisters, espouse at maternal bidding suitors young and eligible. The maternal fiat has gone forth, and tears and despair are powerless to arrest the mandate. The wrong people are, however, married, since Ruth Egerton loves madly Harold Dundas, by whom her sister is led to the altar, and is loved by him with equal fervour. Afterwards, when finding the situation intolerable, Harold goes off to Africa and is reported dead, it is his sister-in-law and not his wife whom the news strikes to the heart. From the ravings of Ruth, Helen, her sister, surprises her secret while herself nursing her so that no one else may learn of the disgrace that has fallen on them, and substitutes for her love for her sister a resentment rapidly developing into hatred. Harold, who is not killed, returns, and love passages between him and Ruth are surprised by Helen, who openly proclaims their infamy. Here the play concludes. When one of the characters representing unconsciously the audience, asks what will be the end, another character, who personates a sort of chorus, responds, "There will be no end." Art is thus, Mr. Grundy holds, as unquestionable and as relentless as life. The representation was marked by the level excellence of



SIR ROBERT CHILTERN  
(Mr. Lewis Waller)

MRS. CHEVELEY  
(Miss Florence West)

AN IDEAL HUSBAND—ACT I.

that of *Guy Domville*. Mr. Sydney Grundy, Mr. Oscar Wilde and Mr. Henry James have in turn appealed to the public, their respective efforts having been presented by three of the most spirited, capable and artistic of



SIR ROBERT CHILTERN  
(Mr. Lewis Waller)

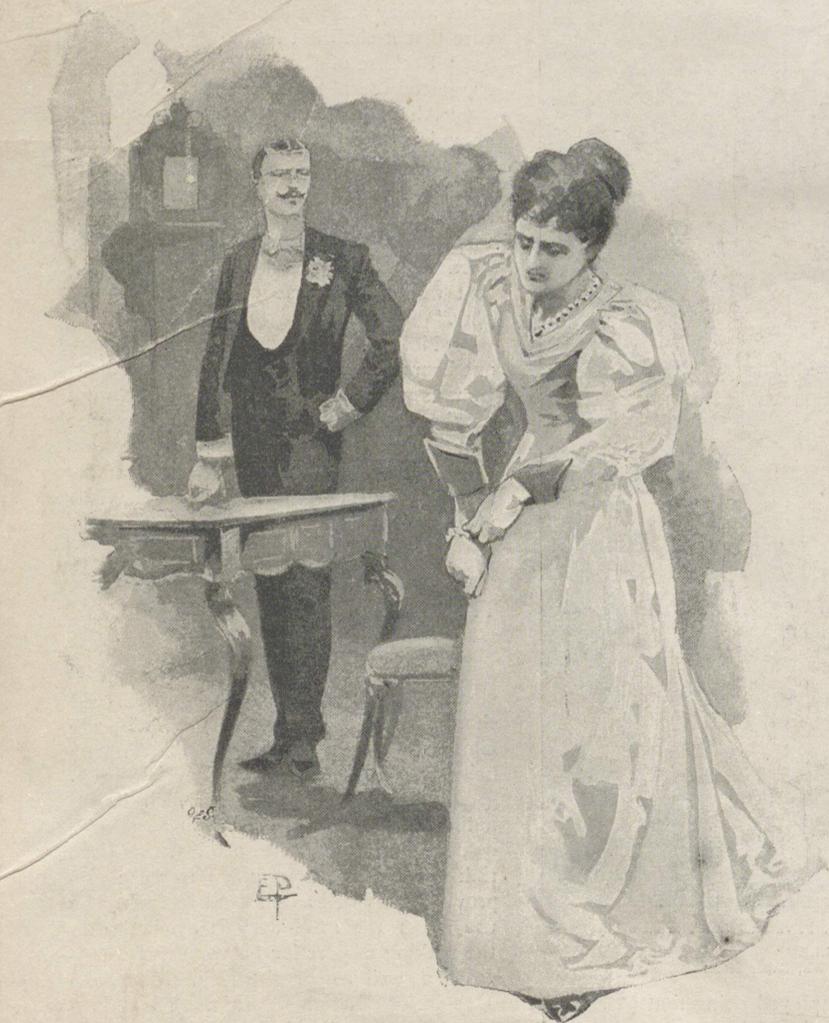
MRS. CHEVELEY  
(Miss Florence West)

LADY CHILTERN  
(Miss Julia Neilson)

AN IDEAL HUSBAND—ACT III.

a cast comprising Messrs. Bouchier, and Brandon Thomas, and Misses Kate Rorke, Calhoun, and Kate Phillips, and by a marvellous presentation by Mr. Hare of aristocratic senility, perhaps the very finest picture yet seen in Mr. Hare's gallery.

In his four-act play, sub-ironically styled *An Ideal Husband*, Mr. Wilde starts with a serious purpose which he speedily abandons, of showing how remorselessly and inevitably Nemesis dogs and treads down the offender. Riding on the flood-tide of fortune into distinction and success, Sir Robert Chiltern, now Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and on the point of obtaining Cabinet rank, finds himself suddenly and unexpectedly menaced with shipwreck, for his prosperous fortunes are the reward of an act of early treachery. While private secretary to an eminent statesman he has sold to a foreign financier a Cabinet secret. The letter in which he has made the shameful revelation has now come into the hands of a woman, who, as the price of yielding it up insists on his championing a financial scheme, which it is his duty to oppose and hold up to public execration. Should he decline she will send the compromising document to the Press and his career is at an end. After some vacillation he finds himself cornered, and reluctantly consents to do as he is bidden. Here we reach a psychological and dramatic stage. Nothing, however, comes. Instead of facing the difficulty, Mr. Wilde, so to speak, masks it and leaves it behind. His bad woman does nothing. Why? She is maladroit enough to lose a diamond brooch which she has stolen, and thus delivers herself, bound and powerless, into the hands of a man who is her enemy and Sir Robert's agent and ally. Nothing now remains for her except to yield up the letter as the price of her own immunity from punishment. Sir Robert thus, after a good fright, retains his privileges, his honours, and his good name and Nemesis proves to be a bogey, a turnip's head with a light



LORD GORING  
(Mr. Charles H. Hawtrey)

MRS. CHEVELEY  
(Miss Florence West)

AN IDEAL HUSBAND—ACT IV.

*The play is superbly moulded and well played by Helen, Waller, Bishop and Hawtrey, and Misses Julia Neilson, Brough, Fratherston, Millist, Forsyth and Florence West.*

inside. The play is superbly mounted and well played by  
Messrs. Walter Bishop and Hawtrej and Misses Julia Neilson,  
Brough, Featherston, Muller, Foyth and Florence West.

2019-03-17 Jissen Women's University Library

84

# BLACK AND WHITE

210

FEBRUARY 16, 1895

## THE PLAY.

---

Questioned as to the merits of his newest production, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, at the St. James's, Mr. Oscar Wilde is reported to have said "the first act is ingenious, the second beautiful, the third abominably clever."

The five o'clock *matinée* at the Haymarket, which will be given as an experiment on the 19th, deserves publicity and success as an attempt to emerge from a groove, find out what the public hardly knows that it wants and provide for it. It is to be hoped that city men and dwellers in the suburbs, for whom the new venture is primarily intended, will show their appreciation, and that the players will not find the strain too great. It will mean for them five hours' work with a very short break for rest and refreshment, for their audience it will mean *An Ideal Husband* between afternoon tea and dinner.

---

NOTES FROM THE THEATRES.

---

Messrs. Waller and Morell are going to try a novel experiment, in giving a *matinée* at five o'clock. Next Tuesday "An Ideal Husband" will be played at this hour, and will terminate at 7.30. The management are of opinion that there are a large number of City men living in the suburbs to whom this hour will be a convenience.

THE PLAY.

NEVER, perhaps, in the records of the drama has a joke at once so colossal and so frivolous as Mr. Oscar Wilde's new play, *The Importance of being Earnest*, been perpetrated on the stage. Its title is a pun, its story a conundrum, its characters are lunatics, its dialogue is galimatias, and its termination is a "sell." It kept, none the less, the St. James's audience simmering with delight, and it will probably count among the chief attractions of the approaching season. Something akin to what is now done had been previously accomplished by Mr. Gilbert in a series of pieces culminating in the Haymarket extravaganza of *Engaged*. Mr. Wilde has, however, fairly distanced his predecessor, and has given to the St. James's a piece that never for a moment "deviates into sense," or sanity. As to supplying an insight into the meaning, you might as well—

"Hunt half a day for a forgotten dream."

John Worthing, J.P., leads a double life. In the country, where he resides in a well-appointed house with a pretty, sentimental and wealthy ward, he is a model of propriety, a pillar of Church and State, a representative country gentleman. In London he is—well—other. To justify his frequent visits to town he has invented a *roué* brother named Ernest whose unruly proceedings and moral delinquencies necessitate his constant interference. This wholly supposititious personage he has painted in colours so attractive to a young, dreaming and innocent girl, that Cecily, his ward, has fallen over head and ears in love with him. What then is her delight when Ernest appears in the shape of a good-looking and amorous scape-grace who makes desperate love to her before he has been in her company five minutes.

This supposed and self-proclaimed Ernest is, in fact, Algernon Moncrieffe, a dissipated young town acquaintance of Worthing, a genuine importation from Restoration comedy, who, hearing of the existence of a pretty, modest and secluded heiress has ridden down post-haste and incognito, to win her. By an ill chance, the moment he has chosen to personate John Worthing's brother is that in which Worthing himself has determined to get out of this burdensome, though imaginary double. Worthing has proposed to and been accepted by Gwendolen Fairfax, who, however, knows him only as Ernest, not as John. Proposing then to get married and abandon all youthful follies he determines to sacrifice his putative brother. Donning, accordingly, a suit of funereal black he goes home to make the tearful announcement that poor Ernest has died in Paris. The shock these tidings are calculated to cause is somewhat modified by the knowledge that Ernest is at the present moment with Cecily in the

*Westminster Gazette*

Mr. and Mrs. Lewis V  
brilliant comedy "A Woman  
matinées in London. Arra  
pleted, but should the pie  
players will be invited to tak

drawing-room alive and kissing, it not kicking. farcical situation is productive of inextinguishable provoking power is, however, eclipsed by that w dolen Fairfax comes down to visit and make f her future husband. At first the prettiest a accepted, and the most tender embraces are l on each other. After a time, however, the na comes up. Each lady, though there is no su self to be engaged to him, and each sniffs in come delicately the sharp claws from the soft v of affection developes through what is almost a a spit, and at length two cats stand prepared

appearance of the lovers comes the cer tude that they are not rivals, with t accompanying revelation that they ha both been befooled. Neither of them betrothed to Ernest Worthing since Erne Worthing does not exist. As in the ca of Mrs. Harris, of immortal fame, there "no sich person." Now, the possessio of the name of Ernest is an indispensab condition of retaining the love of t heroines, whose arms once more interla as they stand in combined resistance the wiles and subterfuges of that monst man. Each of the pair is willing to

Westminster Gazette . 12 May 1900

Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Waller have some idea of reviving that brilliant comedy "A Woman of No Importance" at a series of matinées in London. Arrangements so far have not been completed, but should be accomplished very soon. Several very accomplished players will be invited to take part in its performance.

2019-03-13  
Lissen Women's University Library 88

## "THE FIRST STEP." \*

So far as I know, "The First Step" is the first step taken by Mr. William Heinemann in the path of play-writing, and I hope it will not be the last. No doubt he will be discouraged by the fact that some of the critics have fallen foul of it, and unpleasantly surprised to find that it has been prohibited; but some will see in it, as I do, strong evidence of dramatic instinct. It may be admitted that, as it stands, "The First Step," if actually put on the stage, would be a *premier pas qui coûte*, for there is want of tact—perhaps one should say technique—in the way in which the work is handled. A series of long speeches and soliloquies, in which, rightly, no effort is made to reach absolute beauty of word or idea,

but only to attain fitness, would never please the British public, nor even that more patient people, the French.

Lizzie, too, as a picture of the lower-middle-class girl who so longs for the sunshine of life, because she has been shut up for years in a gloomy religious home, that she becomes reckless, is very solidly drawn, and has some fine touches of character. It may be that there is a needless obscurity about the attitude of Frank, but it is hard to say whether some of it would not disappear in actual stage presentation. It will be noticed that the author has carefully sought to give a real conversational style to

12 May 1900

er have some idea of reviving that of "No Importance" at a series of experiments so far have not been complete given, several very accomplished part in its performance.

his dialogue, and in some instances has caught phrases that are highly and nicely characteristic. Possibly, some will suggest that a girl who says "You beast!" when she is kissed by a man with whom she is flirting violently, is rather more vulgar in style than is necessary. However, this raises a difficult question; probably, the author takes the view that the lower one gets in the classes, the less complex become the emotions, and therefore the more easy to represent forcibly. After all, Lizzie is not more vulgar in feeling than some of the "nobility and gentry" in the plays of Mr. Oscar Wilde. The prohibition of a work which, while avoiding indelicate details, paints a grim, almost repulsive, and decidedly deterrent picture of irregular sex relations, is an absurd abuse of power, and suggests that there is some truth in the rumour that Mr. Pigott has received orders from an exalted being, who does nothing for our drama, to "burke" all pieces that deal with the serious problems of life—truthfully.

MONOCLE.