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Oscar Wilde
Scrapbook

Vol. 3

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 Gwen-dolen 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, 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 90
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 capitally played by Mr. Kinsey Peile.

"THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST."

Mr. John Worthing, of the Manor House, Woolton, Shropshire, in order to explain to his pretty ward, Cecily, with whom he was not in love, his frequent visits to town, imagined the existence of a younger brother, whom he called Ernest, and pretended that he went to see him. When in London he, for no discoverable reason, called himself Ernest. These visits were not culpable in character, for he was courting honestly the Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax. Now, the two girls had what one may call Shandian views about names. By the way, did not Lytton, in "The Caxtons," use Sterne's idea to some extent? Lytton's name naturally comes into mind when one thinks of Mr. Oscar Wilde, for in one aspect the brilliant author of "Pelham" suggests the modern apostle of culture—fortunately, other aspects of Lytton excuse his weaknesses.

Gwendolen fell in love with John because she believed that his name was Ernest. Cecily became enamoured of the mere name of Ernest and the description of him given by John—in which she reminds one of a case cited by Burton in his "Anatomy of Melancholy"—and, being a girl whose studies in French seem to have extended to Marivaux, she actually went so far as to engage herself to this mere fiction. As soon as John, posing as Ernest, proposed to Gwendolen, he was accepted, but he was rather embarrassed to hear her say that his name, Ernest, vibrated in her soul. However, when he spoke to Lady Bracknell—her mother—difficulties arose, for he happened to be a foundling, and Lady Bracknell could not accept as son-in-law a nameless babe, found in a bag at a station. Gwendolen promised to be true despite Mamma's opposition.

Now it chanced that Gwendolen's cousin, Algernon Moneriette, was bosom friend of Worthing. Algy for a long time believed that his friend was Ernest, and did not know his country address. By accident the truth came out, and Worthing, in giving an explanation, injudiciously dwelt upon the charms of Cecily, so, of course, Algy fell in love with the description. For Mr. Wilde works upon the economical plan of using almost all his comic ideas twice. Consequently, Algy went down to the Manor House and gained admittance by pretending that he was Ernest, the imaginary brother. In ten minutes he had proposed to Cecily, and been accepted by her. He, like John, was much embarrassed to find how great was the importance attached by his sweetheart to the name Ernest.

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No doubt, the tale sounds even more than "trivial." Certainly it cannot be pretended that in such matters as construction, invention—or adaptation—of subject, contrivance of comic business, or delineation of character, Mr. Wilde has shown much ability. However, the liveliness of the dialogue saved the piece—even rendered it very successful. I do not believe that the writing is so clever that it would have secured success but for the prestige of the theatre and name of the author, yet cannot deny that it contains many smart speeches. One can have too much of such sayings as "Divorces are made in heaven"—"to have lost one parent is a misfortune, to have lost both looks like carelessness"—or "I am only serious about my amusements." On the other hand, there are many clever jests in the play, and if the average were raised by judicious elimination of the numerous failures, everybody would be heartily amused by "The Importance of being Earnest."

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It cannot be made a reproach against English people (writes a correspondent) that they are unduly influenced by the Press. In theatrical matters especially they show a resolute determination to judge for themselves. Vainly, in various instances, have the critics endeavoured to silence, by their whispers, wild shouts of applause, or to scold the Public into going to see a play it does not fancy. But the Public is a very curious thing; it is sometimes perverse, and even obstinate, and it has evidently made up its mind to like the plays of Mr. Oscar Wilde.

The play at present being given at the Haymarket is a great success, notwithstanding the fact that its point and object have not been entirely understood: I mean the overthrowing of the contemporary fad about the disproportionate value of woman in modern life. "A man's life," says Lord Goring, in "An Ideal Husband," "is more important than a woman's; it has a wider scope, larger issues, higher ambitions. A woman's life revolves in curves of emotion: it is on the straight lines of the intellect that a man's life progresses. . . . If you can keep a man's love, and love him in return, you have done all that we ask of woman." Thus Mr. Wilde places the newest woman in a very charming atmosphere of softness, of gentleness, of forgiveness. And are these not her *raison d'être*? He has shown that, as a man can love, knowing every fault and folly of a woman—loving her, it may be, for these faults and follies the better—so might she also love without idealising him, without trying so vainly to deprive him of his natural sins. After the first shock of knowing her husband doomed to disgrace and exposure, we see Lady Chiltern by his side in sympathising fellowship, ready to mourn with his sorrow, but not to reproach him with his fault. "The Importance of being Earnest," again, is deliciously, airily irresponsible: an extraordinary sustained effort of wit and humour. In brilliant dialogue Mr. Wilde is without a rival; and how versatile an artist he is! Not only a poet, an essayist, a novelist, "an amateur of beautiful things and a dilettante of things delightful," but one of the most brilliant playwrights of modern times. Why carp at "improbability" in what is confessedly the merest delicate bubble of fancy? Why not acknowledge, honestly, a debt of gratitude to one who adds so unmistakably to the gaiety of the nation?

When called before the curtain, with almost uproarious applause, at the St. James's on Thursday night, Mr. Wilde must assuredly have felt, with a subtle enjoyment, all the Importance of being Oscar.

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"The Importance of Being Earnest" is just the right play to be acted by these amateurs who possess two essential qualifications—some natural talent for acting and abundant good humour. These the members of the company who presented the play at the Imperial Theatre yesterday afternoon nearly all possessed, and two of them, both ladies, a good deal more. Miss Cloé Russell and Miss Margaret Gordon were both admirable, the former with charm and a real sense of humour, the latter with a resource which is rarely enough to be found among the ingenues of the professional stage. All the men were in a somewhat lower place, but Mr. Stephen Powys's performance would have been very creditable had he only learned the difficult art of listening.

OUR LADIES' PAGES.

FASHIONS IN THE NEW ST. JAMES'S PIECE.

Only two out of the four female characters in "The Importance of Being Earnest" can, owing to the exigencies of the piece, indulge in smart gowns, but these two—in the persons of Miss Rose Leclercq and Miss Irene Vanbrugh, in themselves the respective personifications of stately and piquant smartness—make up for this fact by the perfection of the



blue forget-me-nots. The bodice has a box-pleated vest of turquoise-blue velvet, softened at the sides and neck by draperies of old lace, and with a neck-ruffle of black accordion-pleated chiffon, continued in cascade frills down the front. The bodice is this time of turquoise-blue velvet, trimmed with lace wings, a white Paradise osprey, and masses of full-blown pink roses.

Then comes the turn of Miss Irene Vanbrugh, who, as the Honourable Gwendolen Fairfax, beats even her own previous record for smartness, with two gowns which are altogether *chic* and original. The first, worn in Act I., has a plain, perfectly hanging skirt of pale-yellow and blue-striped silk, with a faint *moiré* design running through it, the broad pleat in which it is arranged at the back being finished at each side with a short and graduated pleated frill of pale cornflower-blue velvet, which has a very novel effect. The bodice is made in front in a broad box-pleat ornamented with sundry cut-steel buttons, while at each side there is a double pleated frill of velvet, which takes up the position of the more ordinary revers. The sleeves are, of course, fashionably huge as to their dimensions, and are caught in just above the elbow with two velvet tabs fastened with steel buttons; the collar, also of velvet, being tied at the back with a big bow of black satin. But it is on the cape that your admiration will, I think, be chiefly expended, and, indeed, it is lovely enough to be stored up in the mental chamber reserved for the pretty things we are hoping to wear if the mild spring weather ever does deign to put in an appearance. This cape, then, which is short and full, is of the blue velvet, turned back in front—to show the box-pleated front of the bodice—with pointed revers of yellow velvet, embroidered with steel and blue sequins, over other revers of pearly grey satin, covered with fine black lace. These revers are continued at the back in the form of a deep rounded collar, and the whole effect is lovely. Miss Vanbrugh's hat also is too pretty to be omitted, composed, as it is, of black straw, with a full crown of blue velvet, and, for trimming, bunches of yellow cowslips and shaded blue cornflowers.

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which Miss Vanbrugh wears in Acts II. and III. The full skirt and sleeves are fashioned of white *châné* silk, brocaded with irregular wreaths of flowers in a pale shade of violet, and the bodice is of white silk, covered with white lace, and having a waistband of white *glacé* silk, tied in front in the smartest of square bows, the double ends standing out at each side. The collar, with its double rosettes at the back, is of violet velvet, and there are other rosettes on the sleeves; while over the shoulders fall capes of violet silk, covered with white openwork embroidery and cut out in three square battlements, fastened at the sides, both at the back and in the front, with three paste buttons. For finishing touches, imagine a hat of the darkest violet straw, bedecked with a white osprey and an encircling wreath of white lilac and convolvulus and dark-hued violets, and a white chiffon and lace sunshade, with a band of embroidery in violet silk, the handle bearing a dainty burden of pink roses.

This frivolous, dainty figure is, I can assure you, in most striking contrast to the serene and simple beauty of Miss Evelyn Millard, who, clad in a gown of white silk-striped *crêpe*, tied round the waist with a broad white silk sash, and with transparent yoke and cuffs of muslin and insertion, and rose-trimmed Leghorn hat, seems altogether in keeping with the exquisite garden-scene in Act II., which is truly one of the triumphs of scenic art. So there is the tale of the gowns in the latest St. James's success; and now I must give a word to the very effective ball-dress which Miss Elliott Page wears in the little first piece, "In the season." The skirt is of black satin, and the corset bodice opens in deep V-form both at the back and in the front, over a vest of gathered white chiffon sewn thickly with steel paillettes, the square-cut décolletage being softened by a full ruching of the same soft fabric. The full sleeves of chiffon fall open at the sides, to show a glimpse of the arm between, and are caught together again above the elbow with two pink roses, closely set trails of the same flowers passing over the shoulders. A narrow band of fine steel embroidery outlines the satin corset, and accentuates the good effect which its cleverly arranged lines have upon the figure; and altogether, Miss Elliott Page, with her bouquet of pink clove-carnations, makes a very pretty picture in this gown.

The dress which attracted most attention off the stage on the first night was undoubtedly that worn by a beautiful dark-haired and dark-eyed woman, and which, with a skirt of turquoise-blue satin, had a bodice of pink mirror velvet, the square-cut corsage outlined with a band of dark fur, and the great puffed sleeves sewn over with gold sequins. A loose bunch of lilies-of-the-valley was fastened in the front of the bodice, and I can assure you that the box in which sat the wearer of this gown was the cynosure of a good many feminine as well as masculine eyes. Only one ermine cape did I see, and for that I was by no means sorry; but in the stalls alone there were no less than three green velvet cloaks, all having deep capes of magnificent lace, but one being trimmed with sable, the second with chinchilla, and the third with white Thibet fur. Certainly they were wonderfully effective, and after them I did not care much for Mrs. Bernard Beere's crimson velvet cloak with gold-embroidered cape. One of the prettiest girlish dresses was of pale-pink satin, the bodice trimmed with touches of old lace and bunches of dark violets; and I just caught a glimpse of Mrs. George Alexander (who sat well back in her box) in a plain but perfectly cut gown of dark-hued velvet, with diamonds in her hair by way of relief, and a bouquet of pink tulips and lilies of the valley. The Misses Vanbrugh watched their sister from a top box, one in a gown of rose-pink silk veiled with white accordion-pleated chiffon, and the other (Mrs. Arthur Bourchier) in *eau-de-Nil* chiffon, also accordion-pleated.



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As Lady Bracknell, for instance, Miss Leclercq has two elaborate costumes—confections of the Maison Jay, by the way—the first of golden-brown velvet, with plain, full skirt, and a deep and very full cape of the same material, arranged in a wide box-pleat at the back, and bordered in front and at the sides with a deep flounce of magnificent creamy-hued lace, put on quite plain, in order to show off the beauty of the design, and headed by a narrow band of sable. It has a great ruffled collar of black accordion-pleated chiffon, and is adorned in front with rosettes of black satin ribbon, in each of which flashes a paste button. A bonnet with a crown of gold sequins, studded with gold cabochons and surrounded by tiny, gracefully curving black ostrich tips and clusters of pink roses, completes the costume worn in the first Act. For the third, Miss Leclercq has a gown of dark-green silk, striped diagonally with narrow lines of dark petunia satin, and brocaded with a chiné design of pale-pink roses and

blue forget-me-nots. The bodice has a box-pleated vest of turquoise-blue velvet, softened at the sides and neck by draperies of old lace, and worn with a cape of petunia velvet lined with turquoise-blue satin, and with a neck-ruffle of black accordion-pleated chiffon, continued in cascade frills down the front. The bonnet is this time of turquoise-blue velvet, trimmed with lace wings, a white Paradise osprey, and masses of full-blown pink roses.

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If anything could be more charming, it would only be the dress

which Miss Vanbrugh wears in Acts II. and III. The full skirt and sleeves are fashioned of white chiné silk, brocaded with irregular wreaths of flowers in a pale shade of violet, and the bodice is of white silk, covered with white lace, and having a waistband of white glacé silk, tied in front in the smartest of square bows, the double ends standing out at each side. The collar, with its double rosettes at the back, is of violet velvet, and there are other rosettes on the sleeves; while over the shoulders fall capes of violet silk, covered with white openwork embroidery and cut out in three square battlements, fastened at the sides, both at the back and in the front, with three paste buttons. For finishing touches, imagine a hat of the darkest violet straw, bedecked with a white osprey and an encircling wreath of white lilac and convolvulus and dark-hued violets, and a white chiffon and lace sunshade, with a band of embroidery in violet silk, the handle bearing a dainty burden of pink roses.

This frivolous, dainty figure is, I can assure you, in most striking contrast to the serene and simple beauty of Miss Evelyn Millard, who, clad in a gown of white silk-striped *crépon*, tied round the waist with a broad white silk sash, and with transparent yoke and cuffs of muslin and insertion, and rose-trimmed Leghorn hat, seems altogether in keeping with the exquisite garden-scene in Act II., which is truly one of the triumphs of scenic art. So there is the tale of the gowns in the latest St. James's success; and now I must give a word to the very effective ball-dress which Miss Elliott Page wears in the little first piece, "In the season." The skirt is of black satin, and the corselet bodice opens in deep V-form both at the back and in the front, over a vest of gathered white chiffon sewn thickly with steel paillettes, the square-cut décolletage being softened by a full ruching of the same soft fabric. The full sleeves of chiffon fall open at the sides, to show a glimpse of the arm between, and are caught together again above the elbow with two pink roses, closely set trails of the same flowers passing over the shoulders. A narrow band of fine steel embroidery outlines the satin corselet, and accentuates the good effect which its cleverly arranged lines have upon the figure; and altogether, Miss Elliott Page, with her bouquet of pink clove-carnations, makes a very pretty picture in this gown.

The dress which attracted most attention off the stage on the first night was undoubtedly that worn by a beautiful dark-haired and dark-eyed woman, and which, with a skirt of turquoise-blue satin, had a bodice of pink mirror velvet, the square-cut corsage outlined with a band of dark fur, and the great puffed sleeves sewn over with gold sequins. A loose bunch of lilies-of-the-valley was fastened in the front of the bodice, and I can assure you that the box in which sat the wearer of this gown was the cynosure of a good many feminine as well as masculine eyes. Only one ermine cape did I see, and for that I was by no means sorry; but in the stalls alone there were no less than three green velvet cloaks, all having deep capes of magnificent lace, but one being trimmed with sable, the second with chinchilla, and the third with white Thibet fur. Certainly they were wonderfully effective, and after them I did not care much for Mrs. Bernard Beere's crimson velvet cloak with gold-embroidered cape. One of the prettiest girlish dresses was of pale-pink satin, the bodice trimmed with touches of old lace and bunches of dark violets; and I just caught a glimpse of Mrs. George Alexander (who sat well back in her box) in a plain but perfectly cut gown of dark-hued velvet, with diamonds in her hair by way of relief, and a bouquet of pink tulips and lilies of the valley. The Misses Vanbrugh watched their sister from a top box, one in a gown of rose-pink silk veiled with white accordion-pleated chiffon, and the other (Mrs. Arthur Bourchier) in eau-de-Nil chiffon, also accordion-pleated.



Mr. Oscar Wilde's new play at the Haymarket is a dangerous subject, because he has the property of making his critics dull. They laugh angrily at his epigrams, like a child who is coaxed into being amused in the very act of setting up a yell of rage and agony. They protest that the trick is obvious, and that such epigrams can be turned out by the score by any one light-minded enough to condescend to such frivolity. As far as I can ascertain, I am the only person in London who cannot sit down and write an Oscar Wilde play at will. The fact that his plays, though apparently lucrative, remain unique under these circumstances, says much for the self-denial of our scribes. In a certain sense Mr. Wilde is to me our only thorough playwright. He plays with everything: with wit, with philosophy, with drama, with actors and audience, with the whole theatre. Such a feat scandalizes the Englishman, who can no more play with wit and philosophy than he can with a football or a cricket bat. He works at both, and has the consolation, if he cannot make people laugh, of being the best cricketer and footballer in the world. Now it is the mark of the artist that he will not work. Just as people with social ambitions will practise the meanest economies in order to live expensively; so the artist will starve his way through incredible toil and discouragement sooner than go and earn a week's honest wages. Mr. Wilde, an arch-artist, is so colossal lazy that he trifles even with the work by which an artist escapes work. He distils the very quintessence, and gets as product plays which are so unapproachably playful that they are the delight of every playgoer with twopenn'orth of brains. The English critic,

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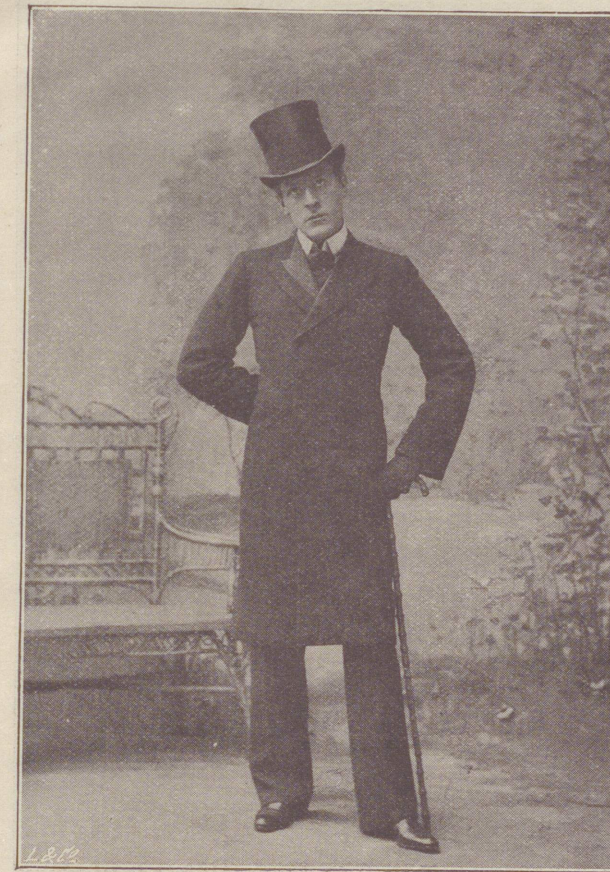
MARCH 20, 1895

THE SKETCH.

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"THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST," AT THE ST. JAMES'S THEATRE.

Photographs by Alfred Ellis, Upper Baker Street, N.W.



JOHN WORTHING, J.P. (MR. GEORGE ALEXANDER).

"My poor brother Ernest!"



CECILY CARDEW, WORTHING'S WARD (MISS MILLARD).

"I keep a diary in order to enter the wonderful secrets of my life. If I didn't write them down, I would probably forget all about them."



CECILY AND WORTHING.

CECILY: "What is the matter, Uncle Jack? You look as if you have a toothache."



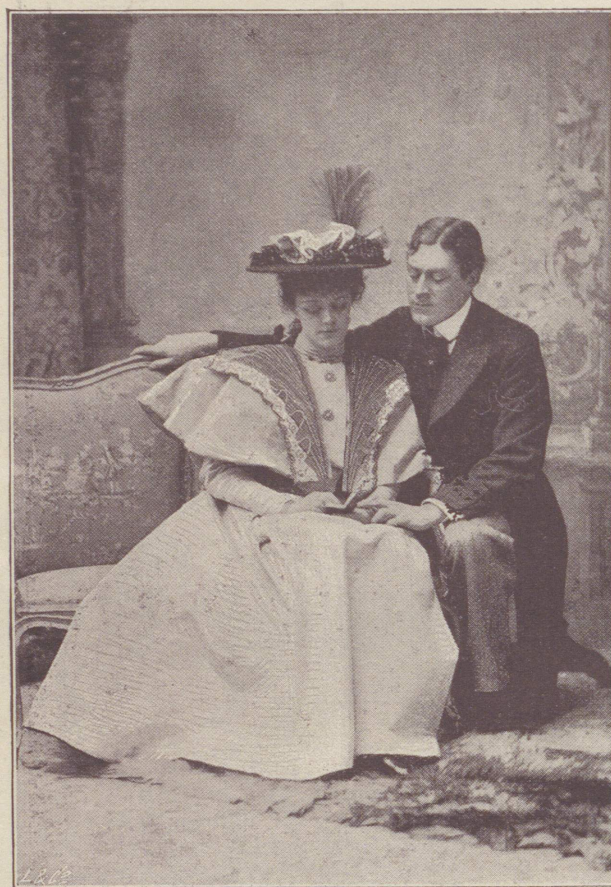
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MISS PRISM: "Memory, my dear Cecily, is the diary we all carry about with us."



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MONCRIEFFE: "Yes, darling, with a little help from others."



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WORTHING: "Nothing will induce me to take his hand!"

Mr. Oscar Wilde's new play at the Haymarket is a dangerous subject, because he has the property of making his critics dull. They laugh angrily at his epigrams, like a child who is coaxed into being amused in the very act of setting up a yell of rage and agony. They protest that the trick is obvious, and that such epigrams can be turned out by the score by any one lightminded enough to condescend to such frivolity. As far as I can ascertain, I am the only person in London who cannot sit down and write an Oscar Wilde play at will. The fact that his plays, though apparently lucrative, remain unique under these circumstances, says much for the self-denial of our scribes. In a certain sense Mr. Wilde is to me our only thorough playwright. He plays with everything: with wit, with philosophy, with drama, with actors and audience, with the whole theatre. Such a feat scandalizes the Englishman, who can no more play with wit and philosophy than he can with a football or a cricket bat. He works at both, and has the consolation, if he cannot make people laugh, of being the best cricketer and footballer in the world. Now it is the mark of the artist that he will not work. Just as people with social ambitions will practise the meanest economies in order to live expensively; so the artist will starve his way through incredible toil and discouragement sooner than go and earn a week's honest wages. Mr. Wilde, an arch-artist, is so colossally lazy that he trifles even with the work by which an artist escapes work. He distils the very quintessence, and gets as product plays which are so unapproachably playful that they are the delight of every playgoer with twopenn'orth of brains. The English critic,

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CECILY: *"What is the matter, Uncle Jack? You look as if you have a toothache."*



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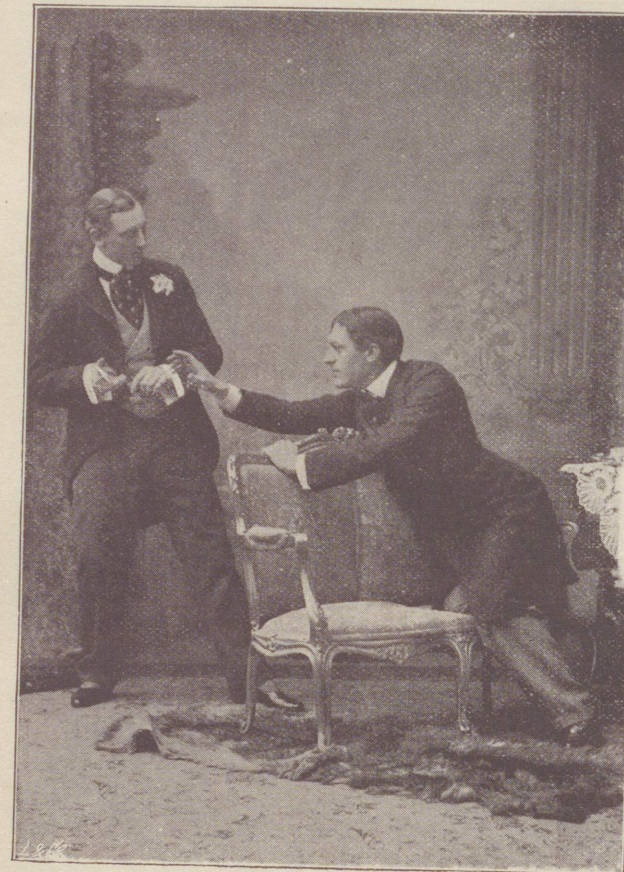
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MISS PRISM (MRS. CANNINGE) AND WORTHING

WORTHING: "Poor Ernest! he had many faults, but it's a sad blow."



MONCRIEFFE AND WORTHING.

WORTHING: "Give me back my cigarette-case."



WORTHING AND MONCRIEFFE.

WORTHING: "You have been christened already."



MONCRIEFFE AND LANE, HIS SERVANT (MR. KINSEY PEILE).

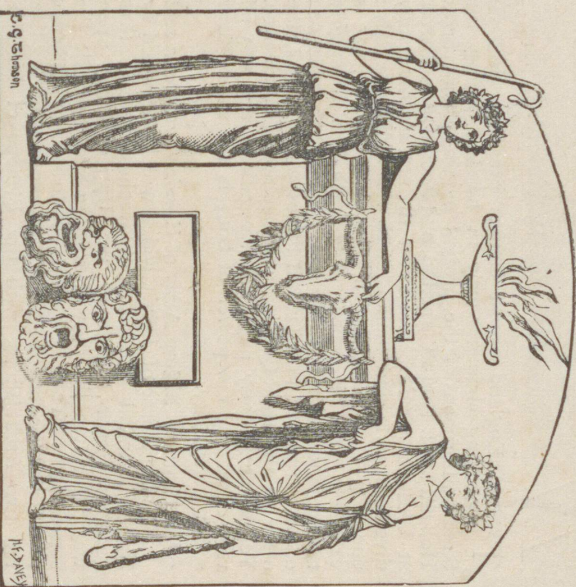
MONCRIEFFE: "Lane, you're a perfect pessimist!"
LANE: "I do my best to give satisfaction."

the swift insight as to the one great dominant truth of all things. *Lady Chiltern* is a true woman—Quixotic in her fantastic hero-worship of the "god of her idolatry"—but melting into the human—
"In love's call,"
forgetting and forgiving, poor *Lady Chiltern's* initial sin, and, in recognising his weakness and her own overstrained attitude towards the ideal husband, she is the first to be converted into reality. *Lady Chiltern* had nearly reached her husband to death and her self into a superior person when the light flashed into her soul that *Lord Goring* was her *lover*, and in the working out of this theme Mr. Wilde boldly becomes like Matthew Arnold's Deity, "a thing not himself, that makes for righteousness." Some day I believe he will write a real play, without an epigram, just as in this instance he has made many epigrams without a play.
It is not a good play, and the end of the third act ends all we want to know, and the fourth is only made interesting by the exquisite charm and dainty handling of the pretty love scene—such a sweet bit of work!—between Miss Maud Millett and *Lord Goring*, who as played by Mr. Charles Hawtreys was a revelation. It is not a good play, for the wicked heroine is to my thinking only our old friend *Zita*, of "Diplomacy," in remarkably tidy frocks; the characters are thin, the plot is unimaginative, and I do not even Mr. Owen Hall do this kind of thing? Of course you must have some incidents on which to hang your brilliant talk, and I need hardly say that all Mr. Wilde's work is characterised by a flawless literary style, but the author has been careless, casual, and possibly remiss in picking up his incidents. The pearls are lustrous. The string is but an old bit of whipcord.

Mr. Oscar Wilde's New Play, "An Ideal Husband," at the Haymarket.



The Gentlewoman.



Plays and Players.

WHEN the curtain fell on Thursday night I certainly found myself in complete accord with the author, who smilingly announced that he "had enjoyed his evening immensely." I didn't approve of the speech, chiefly because the author had said precisely the wrong thing before the public of a man of much importance was assembled, as he really the most concise criticism applicable to this amusing play. For amusing diverting, whimsical, eccentric, flimsy I find it. "I enjoyed it immensely," and I propose to go again and again to enjoy it, as I can sure all London will do for months to come; but I could not, to my regret, take it quite seriously. I was sorry for myself, but the genial author, with his comic speech, soon comforted me. He ended, as he began, with a jest. But there are some readers at seriousness some lofty strivings after pure and noble philosophy, and high and dignified ethics in this curious play, that none, save the crassly vulgar, can fairly recognise.

There are passages of grave and beautiful import poured into the mouths of both St. *Robert* and his idolatrous dominating wife that treat of the religion of Love, of the dominance of Love, that are as good as the best sermons ever preached on the greatest of all texts to be found in any book concerning any religion—"God is Love." The lines are bravely written, with a sincerity and frankness that betrays to its credit—the heart in the right place; the swift insight as to one of the great dominant truths of all things. *Lady Chatterley* is a true woman—Quixotic in her fantastic hero-worship of the "god" of her idolatry—but nothing into the human—

"In brave surrender at my Lord
Love's call,"

forgetting and forgiving. In *Robert's* initial sin, and, in recognizing his weakness and aver own overstated attitude towards her, Ideal Husband resolves these kindly constructed resentments. In *Robert's* *Crithlow*, had nearly wrecked his husband to death and herself into a suspicious person when the light flashed into her soul that *that connivance 'c'est tout pardon*, and in the working out of this theme Mr. Matthew boldly becomes Mr. Matthew. *Robert's* Duty, a thing not to be done, is done, and, in consequence, that Some day I believe he will write a just play without an epilogue, just as in this instance he has made many epigrams without a play.

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Here I must explain to you that the author is opposed to incident, plot, and movement. He has said so. The Sardon "Curran," the Scribe ingeniously are not for him. He wants his people to talk, and they do talk remarkably well. Yet such is the contradiction in his mental attitude that he has to condescend. I had almost said sink, to the tricks of "The Scrap of Paper" to elude out a new motive for that weary fourth act.

Yet is there "immense enjoyment"—I think need the master author, for giving me that word—in the evening. There is not so much paradox as in the earlier works, and when a few bits of such tiring nonsense as "all rascals are absurd," and "there is nothing ages one so happily as happiness," are tinged out of the window, there will remain many bright, caustic, crisp sayings—proverbs of Society on the surface, profoundly philosophical in *bona fide*—to enjoy these good things it is quite immaterial whether you take the Poet or his Pupils seriously. Seeing a play by Mr. Oscar Wilde is like dining out with clever people.

The interpretation of the play is altogether of rare excellence. Miss Florence West is not a great lady, but she plays with a certain distinction that marks an advance on the previous work. Miss Jane Westcott is a very good actress, and she plays her part with a certain amount of finesse. As the *protagonist* the role was somewhat monotonous. As a rule virtue speaks up. Miss Fanny Brough always humorous, is to my thinking quite out of place in this middle-aged Society gossip. Miss Millett is simply sweet. There wasn't a man in the audience who didn't envy Mr. Hawtrey what time went out to the "young man" under the usual Palm Tree.

Mr. Wer plays with fine emotion, and wins sympathy as he struggles with the Fates and Furies that attack his soul, after the manner of the early Athenian dramatists, with whose works the author is no doubt as familiar. Mr. Goring's Brookfield is a vast success as my Land. Mr. Goring's man. He has little to say, save "Yes, my lord," little to do, save pour out—how gently he does it!—his blood and sweat; but then in wail, gesture, voice, tones and expression he is the absolute incarnation of a great and a terrible passion.

He was given a sketch, he has made it a picture of woe.

Last, yet best of all, I record the triumph of Mr. Charles Hawley. It is a well-planned part, that of this two-sided, indolent, impertinent son of a lovely old father—one of Mr. Bishop's neatest conceptions—which plays the fool, plays the lover, and practically plays the all-important character—I am sure Mr. Wilde has read the Greek plays once upon a time—the god from the machine—who sets everything and every body right.

It is a very correct and very winning performance. As a *comedian* Mr. Wer plays in "Castle," concerning another *Cyprian*

Harlequin who begins as a languid swell, and turned up at the trumpet at the finish. "What a thoughtless swell he is!" "What a ham?" Critically, I am glad to play *Sam* to this *Hammy*.

Harley.

Just for the fun of the thing I end, by your leave, with a personal statement. The author of this play, whom I have had the pleasure of knowing since his early boyhood, does not attach any value to my judgment in matters of art and "more particularly in dramatic art." So he informed me after I had noticed in this journal the "Woman of No Importance." For all that I liked his play, his clever, badly made play, and I have assigned my reasons for my absolutely impartial judgement. That will comfort his superior artistic soul to remember that "all reasons are plenty."

"Were reasons as plenty as blackberries I would not give them one upon compulsion," says *Francis to Prince Hal*, but you see the fat knight was not a dramatic critic, and our critic bound to probe for players and for honesty to our craft bound to say why and where and how we like or dislike, and then leave it to our readers to reject our judgment, or to accept it. I have no scruples to offer that you might find in this play smirks at being, and use the fourth act in no other and the talley needs compression. "There must be a fourth act, but let me be a quick, short rapid gathering together of the threads. When husband and wife "make it up," they don't talk much, they kiss and he takes her out to dinner and those quoted, and that venerable antiquity concerning the lady who "talked a great deal but said very little," must be put to a sudden and painless death—stabbed with a blue pencil. The habit of calling people—especially people with titles—by their full, official names is at times irritating, because of its redundancy.

Once we know who *Lord Goring* is we don't expect him to be "lorded" in conversation. Finally, and with a good "Lord" in conversation. And with a lively sense of gratitude to Mr. Oscar Wilde for a delightful evening, I think that if he wants to be "facetious to the good serious" he ought not to make fun of his Christian name to get another joke out of him.

I have read in a good book that "when He loveth *Ham*," hence this article.

Drury Lane

KIND friends in front, before I set out on my round of Pantomime I formulated a little law and prayed a little prayer; and the law was to the effect that you



Mr. Oscar Wilde's New Play, "An Ideal Husband," at the Haymarket

"THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST," AT THE ST. JAMES'S THEATRE.

Photographs by Alfred Ellis, Upper Baker Street, N.W.



MISS PRISM (MRS. CANNINGE) AND WORTHING

WORTHING: "Poor Ernest! he had many faults, but it's a sad blow."



MONCRIEFFE AND WORTHING.

WORTHING: "Give me back my cigarette-case."



WORTHING AND MONCRIEFFE.

WORTHING: "You have been christened already."



MONCRIEFFE AND LANE, HIS SERVANT (MR. KINSEY PEILE).

MONCRIEFFE: "Lane, you're a perfect pessimist!"
LANE: "I do my best to give satisfaction."