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Oscar Wilde  
Scrapbook

Vol. 3

## Comments and Opinions.

### Strauss' "Salome" and E. A. B.

MR. E. A. BAUGHAN, in "The Daily News," declares he is "personally delighted that the public of New York should have expressed itself so forcibly" in the matter of the performance of the Wilde-Strauss opera. For our part, we think the said "public," subscribers and landlords have only succeeded in making themselves appear supremely ridiculous in the eyes of the broadminded inhabitants of Europe. A week or so ago the opera in question had been played at as many as thirty-five different operatic centres. Is the moral strength of New York a model for the older countries in which performances of the opera have been sanctioned?

Do we consider New York better governed than Berlin? We would wish to give a heavy knock on the head to the Puritanical nonsense of New York. It lingers a little, however, in this country. We will fight, with all our strength, against any revival of the movement. We do not want, merely, an exterior virtue. Let a person practice what he preaches. We know, however, he sometimes gets into hot water for his honesty: and is so wrongly judged. For instance, the French are frequently rated by Englishmen more immoral than other nations. Are they? We say it is simply the Frenchman frankly admits the weaknesses that the flesh is heir to. That is what materially helps to make him so charming: only, however, to enlightened and non-humbugging Englishmen. We admit that Salome's embracing of the severed head of John the Baptist is not exactly an event that is of drawing-room refinement. But, after all, on the stage, it is only a property severed head: however real the performance, no one imagines he sees a real human head on the silver shield. The few Puritans who find it advantageous to be Puritanical have never openly objected to the really-disgusting sights in our English streets: to wit, a newly-killed sheep hanging up in a shop front, horribly bleeding from the nose and in full view of passers-by. The New York Puritans, dear good god-loving souls, must come over here and prohibit it instantly, seconded by London's Puritans. Let us be sincere—let us not make such a fuss over the exhibition of a property human head. Let us, also, not stupidly associate Oscar Wilde's moral twist with the distinguished literary work he bequeathed to us. The "wickedest" men have often produced the best art. A heading in E. A. B.'s article runs: "Phosphorescence of Decay." Would he declare the portion of the Bible that relates the foundation of the Wilde-Strauss opera shows "Phosphorescence of Decay"? That is mere sensational journalism. The subject has interested several writers and musicians. We assume it is because it has some wide bearing on life. Probably they are not very friendly with those who are ever urging the necessity of decent plays for decent people. What they urge is, possibly, real plays for real people. Clement Scott was, latterly, always talking of decency. It is erroneous to imagine that art is political or owes its origin to do people good. It does do good, but the men responsible for it set out with no philanthropic end. A regard for the public is stultifying to an art's growth. The public must

be lead, as Wagner, among others, leads them. He was no Puritan. And he suffered, in a degree, for his non-humbug. As to the question of so-called morbidity in modern music, that is merely a sign of the times. There will be a re-action, but we shall go back to so-called morbidity as surely as cheerfulness will follow. There is no drama, however, in pure cheerfulness. We must have a cloud. "Salome" has not the immense reach of a Shakespearian drama, but it is human, and we read the Bible narrative with reverence and an increasing knowledge of human nature. Why, if the subject is so indecent? Enough has been said. But we cannot refrain from quoting a few lines from the Berlin correspondent of "The Musical World": "The production of this marvellous work was an epoch in our theatrical annals. The theme of 'Salome' is exotic and terrible, to many people even revolting, but—in contra-distinction to the legendary plots of Wagner's operas—it is true, and the characters pulsate with life. As to the music, it holds one spell-bound, from the moment the curtain rises (unannounced by overture) to the end of the one long act that comprises the gigantic work. It is the greatest music-drama of the age, of that there can be no doubt; and it is not the concatenation of discords, some people would have us believe. On the contrary, there are passages of exquisite beauty, of most delicate melody; 'Salome' has been not inaptly

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age . THE MUSICAL STANDARD shall not be Puritanical  
like "The Daily News." We believe in liberty in art--  
in being, in other words, broadminded. Even more than  
that, we will fight for it.

My reference to one of the volumes of the "Notable Scottish Trials Series" and my expression of a desire that such publications were issued in England as well has brought me a pleasant reminder from Mr. Gerald Duckworth that he is the publisher of four dainty volumes entitled State Trials, Political and Social; but this book I have long had on my shelves. Much of it I read in early years, when certain of these trials were compiled from Howell's huge book by one Jardine. Jardine's work was in two little volumes, and well do I remember reading the trial of Sir Walter Raleigh—with that famous sentence of Coke's, "I thou thee, thou traitor"—the trial of the Earl of Essex, and certain of the others.

Every line of these four volumes of State Trials is well worth reading to the student of literature. Perhaps not the least interesting is the trial of the grandfather of Cowper, the poet, and the trial also of the immediate predecessor of Lord Byron in the peerage. It is singular that two of the most famous of modern poets should have been so closely associated with trials for murder.

The 5th Lord Byron, it will be remembered, killed his cousin, Mr. Chaworth, in an altercation at the "Star and Garter" tavern in Pall Mall in 1765. He was declared guilty of manslaughter, but claiming certain privileges as a peer he was allowed to go scot free. Spencer Cowper, the grandfather of the poet of the same name, was charged with the murder of Sarah Stout in 1699. He was acquitted and he lived to be attorney-general and a distinguished judge, while his brother was the first lord chancellor of Great Britain.

All the same I had not intended to refer to trials of state significance when I expressed the wish to see the publication of a series of English trials similar to these from Scotland. The interest of these Scottish trials, published by Mr. Hodge of Glasgow, is that each volume is self-contained—Madeleine Smith, Deacon Brodie, James Stewart of Appin, each makes a separate volume. There are several trials within my memory, or within the tradition of early years, that I should be glad to make acquaintance with in this fashion.

I would willingly read of the trial of Wainwright, the poisoner, whom some of us only know through the essay by Mr. Oscar Wilde; of Thurtell, whom we know from references in George Borrow, in Carlyle, and in many another quarter—only the other day that clever and prolific writer, "Dick Donovan," wrote a novel upon it—above all of Müller, who somewhere in the sixties created a fever of excitement through England by murdering a Mr. Briggs in a railway carriage. That trial is known to the present generation only by an amusing reference by Mr. Matthew Arnold. There are great possibilities in a series of this kind if only they have such good introductions and so many interesting notes as are to be found in Mr. Hodge's series.

LITERARY NOTES.

In these suffragette days, when chain-mail for the House of Commons police seems what the doctors call indicated, it is refreshing to find, at least one of the weaker sex with the courage of his opinions. In his "Autour du féminisme" M. Théodore Joran flings himself into the breach, and with more zeal than grammar denounces the feminist movement as "the unclean and dangerous reptile who ought to be crushed." His style is not impeccable, and has drawn upon him the castigation of M. Salomon Reinach, the learned secretary-general of the Académie des Inscriptions, who, in a notice in the "Revue Critique," has not only reflected upon M. Joran's parts of speech to some purpose, but has shown that, schoolmaster though he is, he has not even a distant acquaintance with the Latin tongue. Yet M. Joran gives some excellent and weighty reasons for the services of women being paid at a less rate than those of men. He says in effect that women do not have to live on their wages, that they do not spend money on tobacco or drinks for their fellows, and that they can make their own clothes. The first of these reasons has, indeed, little foundation outside the trade of literature, where the lady bread-snatcher often obtains an undue preference by the wealth which enables her to cultivate the social amenities; but the second seems of unanswerable cogency, and the late Sir Walter Besant commented more than once on the shameful fact that girls do not stand treat to each other. But it is the third which affords most hope to the downtrodden male, and points out the means by which he will soon be able to defy female competition. Let him but learn to make his own clothes, and he will be able to live on the slender stipend which is, teste M. Joran, sufficient for the woman-worker. Perhaps it is after this end that some of the most advanced members of the present Parliament are striving. If so, I gather from the strictures of my fellow-journalists in the "Tailor and Cutter" that their efforts, though praiseworthy in beginners, have not yet been crowned with much success.

Signs are not wanting, however, that, in the matter of clothes, men and women are beginning to think more nearly alike than of old. An article by M. Marcel Boulenger on "Le Dandysme," which is in form a review of M. Boutel de Monvel's "Beau Brummel" and M. Jacques Boulenger's "Les Dandys sous Louis Philippe"—how is this, by the way, for, as bill-discounters say, pig upon pork?—gives one the sad impression that the race of dandies is extinct. The nearest the reviewer can get to a modern copy of the gentlemen who in Queen Elizabeth's time used to spend a fortune on a coat is the late Oscar Wilde. But that person was no more a dandy than was the deceased nobleman who appeared in private theatricals in trousers bespangled with real diamonds. The poet was indeed known to wear knee-breeches in morning dress, but the object, as in the other case mentioned, was plainly to draw attention to his legs and otherwise to make himself conspicuous. Either achievement would be repulsive to the true dandy, whose whole aim in life was to be not gorgeously but perfectly dressed, and who would have blushed even more to find himself a day in advance of the fashion than at being a day behind it. If any one seeks confirmation of this, let him study the charming scene—perhaps one of the wittiest in the English language—in Vanbrugh's "Relapse," where Lord Foppington, the prince of coxcombs, and proud, as he says, to be at the head of so prevailing a party, devotes himself to the serious task of adorning his person. Such an enthusiast would have dressed well on a desert island, and probably cared very little whether any one saw his clothes or not; but who has heard of a woman going gorgeously except for the purpose of outshining her own sex, or attracting the other? Wherefore it follows that, the advertisements to the contrary notwithstanding, there can be no such thing as "Lady Dandies."

Musique à l'Etranger

Première représentation, à l'Opéra royal de Dresde, de Salomé, drame lyrique, en un acte, d'Oscar Wilde; musique de M. Richard Strauss.

(De notre envoyé spécial)

L'Opéra de Dresde, coutumier de belles fêtes musicales, vient de représenter pour la première fois la Salomé, de M. Richard Strauss. C'est un événement d'une importance toute particulière, en raison du nom de M. Strauss et de la valeur exceptionnelle de son œuvre.

Le sujet de la pièce est trop connu pour qu'il soit utile d'y beaucoup insister. Tous les lettrés savent l'éclat du conte d'Hérodiade, de Flaubert. Ils possèdent ainsi la donnée de la Salomé, d'Oscar Wilde.

Celui-ci a délibérément supprimé tout ce qui pouvait servir d'exposition. Il nous a supposés suffisamment instruits du sujet pour nous jeter dès l'abord dans l'action. De la sorte, celle-ci peut se dérouler avec une intensité dramatique singulièrement poignante dans le court intervalle qui sépare le crépuscule du lever du soleil.

La Mort, l'Amour, et l'Amour dans la Mort, voilà toute la pièce : Mort, Narraboth, le jeune capitaine qui ne peut supporter les paroles enflées que Salomé adresse à Jochanaan ; mort Jochanaan, morte Salomé ; mort bientôt Hérode Antipas. C'est devant la tête morte du Baptiste que Salomé chante ses plus douces, ses plus amoureuses plaintes, c'est à une femme morte que ressemble cette lune laiteuse et fugitive qui traverse lentement le ciel. Mais elle ressemble aussi à la beauté d'une « jeune vierge », et ce sont des mots d'amour que lui adressent Salomé et Hérode, car elle est faite à l'image de leur pensée et de leur destin.

Ce n'est point la Juive, « si charmante et touchante d'humilité », que représente Salomé, c'est la Syrienne qui inspire le Cantique des cantiques, pour qui l'inceste est presque une loi, et Sémiramis, Loth et Myrrha des divinités. C'est la Syrienne en proie aux sept démons qui confond, dans son culte d'amour, la beauté, la mort et la résurrection ; et si l'histoire ne l'eût rendue véridique, nulle fable n'eût été plus singulièrement profonde que celle de la rencontre de la fille d'Hérodiade avec celui qui le premier versa l'eau du baptême sur le front du Ressuscité. Elle apostrophe audacieusement saint Jean ; son amour, son désir, elle l'exprime avec l'ardeur d'un adolescent, et comme la Sulamite, c'est elle qui lui peint ses charmes dans un langage qui semble emprunté au Cantique des cantiques (1) :

Jochanaan, je suis amoureuse de ton corps ! Jochanaan, ta chair est blanche comme les lis d'un champ, que la feuille n'a jamais effleurés. Ta chair est blanche comme la neige des monts de la Judée. Les roses du jardin de la reine d'Arabie ne sont point aussi blanches que ton corps ; ni les roses du jardin de la Reine, ni les premières fleurs du crépuscule sur les feuilles, ni le sein de la lune sur la mer ne sont aussi blancs que ton corps. Laisse-le-moi caresser, ton corps !

Je desirer ta bouche, Jochanaan ! Ta bouche est comme un ruban d'écarlate au sommet d'une tour d'ivoire ! Elle est comme un fruit de grenade, fendu par un couteau d'argent ! Les fleurs de grenade, dans les jardins de Tyr, plus brillantes que les roses, ne sont point aussi rouges. Les rouges fanfares des trompettes, qui annoncent l'arrivée des Rois et devaient lesquelles l'ennemi tremble, sont moins rouges que ta bouche rouge ! Ta bouche est plus rouge que les pieds des vendangeurs qui pressent le vin dans les pressoirs. Elle est plus rouge que les pieds des vendangeurs qui nichent dans les temples. Ta bouche est comme un ramesau de corail dans le crépuscule de la mer, comme la pourpre des trésors de Moab, la pourpre des Rois. Rien dans le monde n'est aussi rouge que ta bouche. Laisse-la-moi baiser, ta bouche.

(1) Je traduis ce fragment du texte allemand, d'ailleurs remarquable, de M. Lachmann, l'édition française originale étant introuvable.

Ainsi, sans encombrante exposition, sans peinture approfondie de caractères, sans fausse psychologie, les personnages s'expriment et s'expliquent eux-mêmes. Ils disent leurs haïnes et leurs désirs : Jochanaan, sa haine des Pharisiens et des Sadducéens ; Hérodiade, sa haine de Jochanaan ; Salomé, ses désirs angoissés, ses espérances sanglantes, son indifférence à la mort de Narraboth dont le cadavre la sépare de Jochanaan, sans qu'elle cesse pour cela ces appels qui ne connaissent point de pudeur. Hérode, par la seule vertu du mouvement dramatique, est tracé de main de maître. Il est craintif, nerveux, luxurieux et désordonné ; ses appétits ne sont point gloutons, il aime la débauche raffinée ; l'inceste le tente ; il implore Salomé de boire dans sa coupe, de mordre un fruit qu'il achèvera, de s'asseoir sur son trône, de partager sa puissance, enfin de danser.

La Danse de Salomé ! Mais ici la musique intervient. Qu'est devenu sous la plume du musicien ce poème d'une sensualité aussi franche, d'une poésie aussi troublante, mais où l'émotion plastique entre pour une part infiniment plus grande que l'humaine ? Salomé n'est point devenue une cantilène languide, soupirée à peine et d'un charme affadé.

M. Strauss a compris que dans cette volupté il y avait du sang ; et c'est avec du sang qu'il a exprimé la sensualité de Salomé. On ne trouve dans sa partition aucune de ces pages « charmantes » qui semblent être le propre de tout orientalisme. Tout y est fort et noble. Ne pensez pas pour cela que la poésie de la pièce ait disparu ; bien au contraire ; elle est simplement traduite avec des moyens qui ne sont point traditionnels. Il serait difficile de trouver une idée mieux adaptée au caractère du personnage que celle de Salomé ; une scène plus évocatrice que la première, où le paysage tout baigné de lune semble émaner de l'orchestre même ; tandis que Salomé prodigue à Narraboth les plus séduisantes avances.

Par contre, c'est avec un lyrisme d'une intensité, d'une violence extrêmes, qu'est rendue la longue scène entre Salomé et le Baptiste. On imagine malaisément les accents de plus en plus exaspérés que M. Strauss a trouvés pour traduire l'audacieux langage de la fille d'Hérodiade. Elle n'a point chanté son amour en mélodieux plaintives, mais il a décelé toute la puissance tragique que renferme cette sorte d'érotisme funèbre, cet impur parfum des cultes de Syrie dont parle Michelet.

Il a évoqué un Orient non point brutal, mais d'une extrême violence de couleur, non pas raffiné, mais d'une sensualité véritablement barbare, et tout cela sans l'appareil obligé de doubles pédales surmontées de gammes mineures ou jouent de faciles secondes augmentées ; il a peine indiqué par des suites de tons entiers une atmosphère particulière et la danse même de Salomé, toute vivante, toute heurtée de rythmes qui s'entrechoquent comme des cris de luxure, exprime le « drame » avec autant d'intensité que la parole.

Il ne m'est pas permis d'analyser en détail une œuvre qui s'annonce comme l'une des manifestations les plus importantes de l'art contemporain. Salomé est la première œuvre allemande de grand style qui s'écarte sensiblement de la forme wagnérienne ; à ce point de vue particulier, la représentation fut d'un intérêt capital, autant par la nouveauté propre du développement musical dramatique inauguré par M. Strauss, que par les intéressantes comparaisons qu'elle suscite avec certaines œuvres récemment parues en France. Ainsi paraît se généraliser une évolution dans le drame lyrique qui semble devoir donner des résultats inattendus.

Plus personnel que Feuersnot, d'invention mélodique plus choisie, Salomé vaut encore par la prodigieuse qualité de la mise en œuvre. La mélodie y est dégagée de toute harmonie traditionnelle. L'écriture y est d'une liberté qui semble braver toute contrainte. Il ne faudrait point en juger d'après une réduction de piano ; quelle que soit sa perfection, elle ne saurait rendre la séduction d'un orchestre merveilleux de variété, de souplesse et d'invention, où les plus invraisemblables duretés d'écriture se fondent en un ravissement.

La longue attente qui précède l'apparition de la tête du Baptiste hors de la citerne, la longue scène où Salomé tend et haineuse baise enfin les lèvres du mort, son triomphe où l'amour même s'exaspère encore, sont des pages où l'on trouve une émotion rare qu'il est donné à peu d'artistes de faire sentir.

Certes M. Richard Strauss ne s'est point laissé tenter par ces curiosités instrumentales que son sujet et sa virtuosité technique lui eussent permis. Mais cependant, à maintes reprises c'est à l'orchestre que sont dues les plus rares impressions tragiques. Je citerai entre autres, pendant la scène où Salomé attend la tête de Jochanaan, les gémissements que produisent sur un roulement de timbales, les sons harmoniques des contrebasses à découvert. Cela est neuf et prodigieusement expressif.

Un instrument nouveau, déjà utilisé dans la Symphonie Domestica apparait pour la première fois dans un orchestre de théâtre : c'est « l'héklophon », instrument dont Wagner réclamait la création il y a une quarantaine d'années. C'est un instrument en bois, à anche, à l'octave inférieure du hautbois — dont la sonorité très caractéristique, est douce et mordante à la fois.

Il me reste, après avoir essayé de vous dire la valeur singulière de Salomé, de vous parler de son interprétation. Là

aussi ce fut un émerveillement. Grâce aux soins intelligents d'un intendant général ami des arts et très averti de tout ce qui les concerne, Son Excellence le comte de Seebach, Salomé a été réalisée de façon à soutenir la comparaison avec les scènes les plus réputées d'Europe. Un orchestre de cent musiciens, d'une homogénéité, d'une sonorité remarquables, était conduit par M. Von Schuch. L'éminent capellmeister qui depuis plus de trente ans, préside aux destinées de l'Opéra de Dresde. Il a conduit cette partition, d'une difficulté inouïe avec une sûreté, une souplesse et une ardeur réellement admirables.

M. Burrian chantait Hérode, dessinant le rôle en une curieuse silhouette de despote maladif et inquiet ; il a osé le pousser par moment jusqu'au grotesque et a reconstitué ainsi la figure saisissante que l'auteur avait conçue.

Mme Wittich n'a pas le physique qui convient à Salomé, mais a chanté le rôle avec une expression si intense, avec une chaleur si persuasive, qu'elle est parvenue à donner l'illusion d'une Salomé idéale. Jochanaan, c'était M. Perron, bien connu des habitués de Bayreuth, qui appréciant son expérience et son autorité. Le Quintette des Juifs — un épisode remarquable de la pièce — a été rendu à la perfection par des artistes de premier ordre, qui ont consenti à jouer ces personnages secondaires. Il est vrai que ce morceau est d'une telle complexité musicale que seuls des chanteurs de grande valeur pouvaient l'exécuter ainsi.

Une mise en scène d'un goût parfait, des éclairages judicieusement réglés, un décor d'une ingénieuse poésie, du au talent de M. Bieck, complétaient l'attrait du spectacle.

Robert Brussel.

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# Musique à l'Étranger

Première représentation, à l'Opéra royal de Dresde, de *Salomé*, drame lyrique, en un acte, d'Oscar Wilde; musique de M. Richard Strauss.

(De notre envoyé spécial)

L'Opéra de Dresde, coutumier de belles fêtes musicales, vient de représenter pour la première fois la *Salomé*, de M. Richard Strauss. C'est un événement d'une importance toute particulière, en raison du nom de M. Strauss et de la valeur exceptionnelle de son œuvre.

Le sujet de la pièce est trop connu pour qu'il soit utile d'y beaucoup insister. Tous les lettrés savent l'éclat du conte d'*Hérodiade*, de Flaubert. Ils possèdent ainsi la donnée de la *Salomé*, d'Oscar Wilde.

Celui-ci a délibérément supprimé tout ce qui pouvait servir d'exposition. Il nous a supposés suffisamment instruits du sujet pour nous jeter dès l'abord dans l'action. De la sorte, celle-ci peut se dérouler avec une intensité dramatique singulièrement poignante dans le court intervalle qui sépare le crépuscule du lever du soleil.

La Mort, l'Amour, et l'Amour dans la Mort, voilà toute la pièce : Mort, Narraboth, le jeune capitaine qui ne peut supporter les paroles enfiévrées que Salomé adresse à Jochanaan ; mort Jochanaan, morte Salomé ; mort bientôt Hérode Antipas. C'est devant la tête morte du Baptiste que Salomé chante ses plus douces, ses plus amoureuses plaintes, c'est à une femme morte que ressemble cette lune laiteuse et fugitive qui traverse lentement le ciel. Mais elle ressemble aussi à la beauté d'une « jeune vierge », et ce sont des mots d'amour que lui adressent Salomé et Hérode, car elle est faite à l'image de leur pensée et de leur destin.

Ce n'est point la Juive, « si charmante et touchante d'humilité », que représente Salomé, c'est la Syrienne qui inspira le *Cantique des cantiques*, pour qui l'inceste est presque une loi, et Sémiramis, Loth et Myrrha des divinités. C'est la Syrienne en proie aux sept démons qui confond, dans son culte d'amour, la beauté, la mort et la résurrection ; et si l'histoire ne l'eût rendue véridique, nulle fable n'eût été plus singulièrement profonde que celle de la rencontre de la fille d'Hérodiade avec celui qui le premier versa l'eau du baptême sur le front du Ressuscité. Elle apostrophe audacieusement saint Jean ; son amour, son désir, elle l'exprime avec l'ardeur d'un adolescent, et comme la Sulamite, c'est elle qui lui peint ses charmes dans un langage qui semble emprunté au *Cantique des cantiques* (1) :

Jochanaan, je suis amoureuse de ton corps ! Jochanaan, ta chair est blanche comme les lis d'un champ, que la faucille n'a jamais effleurés. Ta chair est blanche comme la neige des monts de la Judée. Les roses du jardin de la reine d'Arabie ne sont point aussi blanches que ton corps ; ni les roses du jardin de la Reine, ni les premières lueurs du crépuscule sur les feuilles, ni le sein de la lune sur la mer ne sont aussi blancs que ton corps. Laisse-le-moi caresser, ton corps !

Je désire ta bouche, Jochanaan ! Ta bouche est comme un ruban d'écarlate au sommet d'une tour d'ivoire ! Elle est comme un fruit de grenade, fendu par un couteau d'argent ! Les fleurs de grenade, dans les jardins de Tyr, plus brûlantes que les roses, ne sont point aussi rouges. Les rouges fanfares des trompettes, qui annoncent l'arrivée des Rois et devant lesquelles l'ennemi tremble, sont moins rouges que ta bouche rouge ! Ta bouche est plus rouge que les pieds des vendeurs qui pressent le vin dans les pressoirs. Elle est plus rouge que les pattes des tourterelles qui nichent dans les temples. Ta bouche est comme un rameau de corail dans le crépuscule de la mer, comme la pourpre des trésors de Moab, la pourpre des Rois. Rien dans le monde n'est aussi rouge que ta bouche. Laisse-la-moi baiser, ta bouche.

(1) Je traduis ce fragment du texte allemand, d'ailleurs remarquable, de M. Lachmann, l'édition française originale étant introuvable.

Ainsi, sans encombrante exposition, sans peinture approfondie de caractères, sans fausse psychologie, les personnages s'expriment et s'expliquent eux-mêmes. Ils disent leurs haines et leurs désirs : Jochanaan, sa haine des Pharisiens et des Sadducéens ; Hérodiade, sa haine de Jochanaan ; Salomé, ses désirs angoissés, ses espiègleries sanglantes, son indifférence à la mort de Narraboth dont le cadavre la sépare de Jochanaan, sans qu'elle cesse pour cela ces appels qui ne connaissent point de pudeur. Hérode, par la seule vertu du mouvement dramatique, est tracé de main de maître. Il est craintif, nerveux, luxurieux et désordonné ; ses appétits ne sont point glorieux, il aime la débauche raffinée ; l'inceste le tente : il implore Salomé de boire dans sa coupe, de mordre un fruit qu'il achèvera de s'asseoir sur son trône, de partager sa puissance, enfin de danser.

La Danse de Salomé ! Mais ici la musique intervient. Qu'est devenu sous la plume du musicien ce poème d'une sensualité aussi franche, d'une poésie aussi troublante, mais où l'émotion plastique entre pour une part infiniment plus grande que l'humanité ? *Salomé* n'est point devenue une cantilène languide, soupirée à peine et d'un charme affadé.

M. Strauss a compris que dans cette volupté il y avait du sang ; et c'est avec du sang qu'il a exprimé la sensualité de *Salomé*. On ne trouve dans sa partition aucune de ces pages « charmantes » qui semblent être le propre de tout orientalisme. Tout y est fort et noble. Ne pensez pas pour cela que la poésie de la pièce ait disparu, bien au contraire ; elle est simplement traduite avec des moyens qui ne sont point traditionnels. Il serait difficile de trouver une idée mieux adaptée au caractère du personnage que celle de Salomé : une scène plus évocatrice que la première, où le paysage tout baigné de lune semble émaner de l'orchestre même, tandis que Salomé prodigue à Narraboth les plus séduisantes avances.

Par contre, c'est avec un lyrisme d'une intensité, d'une violence extrêmes, qu'est rendue la longue scène entre Salomé et le Baptiste. On imagine malaisément les accents de plus en plus exaspérés que M. Strauss a trouvés pour traduire l'audacieux langage de la fille d'Hérodiade. Il n'a point chanté son amour en mélodiques plaintives, mais il a décelé toute la puissance tragique que renferme cette sorte d'érotisme funèbre, cet impur parfum des cultes de Syrie dont parle Michelet.

Il a évoqué un Orient non point brutal, mais d'une extrême violence de couleur, non pas raffiné, mais d'une sensualité véritablement barbare, et tout cela sans l'appareil obligé de doubles pédales surmontées de gammes mineures où jouent de faciles secondes augmentées ; il a à peine indiqué par des suites de tons entiers une atmosphère particulière et la danse même de Salomé, toute vivante, toute heurtée de rythmes qui s'entrechoquent comme des cris de luxure, exprime le « drame » avec autant d'intensité que la parole.

Il ne m'est pas permis d'analyser en détail une œuvre qui s'annonce comme l'une des manifestations les plus importantes de l'art contemporain. *Salomé* est la première œuvre allemande de grand style qui s'écarte sensiblement de la forme wagnérienne. A ce point de vue particulier, la représentation fut d'un intérêt capital, autant par la nouveauté propre du développement musical dramatique inauguré par M. Strauss, que par les intéressantes comparaisons qu'elle suscite avec certaines œuvres récemment parues en France. Ainsi paraît se généraliser une évolution dans le drame lyrique qui semble devoir donner des résultats inattendus.

Plus personnel que *Feuersnot*, d'invention mélodique plus choisie, *Salomé* vaut encore par la prodigieuse qualité de la mise en œuvre. La mélodie y est dégagée de toute harmonie traditionnelle. L'écriture y est d'une liberté qui semble braver toute contrainte. Il ne faudrait point en juger d'après une réduction de piano ; quelle que soit sa perfection, elle ne saurait rendre la séduction d'un orchestre merveilleux de variété, de souplesse et d'invention. Les dures duretés d'écriture se fondent en un ravissement.

La longue attente qui précède l'apparition de la tête du Baptiste hors de la citerne, la longue scène où Salomé tend et haineuse baise enfin les lèvres du mort, son triomphe où l'amour même s'exaspère encore, sont des pages où l'on trouve une émotion rare qu'il est donné à peu d'artistes de faire sentir.

Certes M. Richard Strauss ne s'est point laissé tenter par ces curiosités instrumentales que son sujet et sa virtuosité technique lui eussent permis. Mais cependant, à maintes reprises c'est à l'orchestre que sont dues les plus rares impressions tragiques. Je citerai entre autres, pendant la scène où Salomé attend la tête de Jochanaan, les gémissements qui produisent sur un roulement de timbales, les sons harmoniques des contrebasses à découvert. Cela est neuf et prodigieusement expressif.

Un instrument nouveau, déjà utilisé dans la *Symphonia Domestica* apparaissait pour la première fois dans un orchestre de théâtre : c'est « l'heklophone », instrument dont Wagner réclamait la création il y a une quarantaine d'années. C'est un instrument en bois, à anche, à l'octave inférieure du hautbois — dont la sonorité très caractéristique, est douce et mordante à la fois.

Il me reste, après avoir essayé de vous dire la valeur singulière de *Salomé*, de vous parler de son interprétation. Là

aussi ce fut un émerveillement. Grâce aux soins intelligents d'un intendant général ami des arts et très averti de tout ce qui les concerne, Son Excellence le comte de Seebach, *Salomé* a été réalisée de façon à soutenir la comparaison avec les scènes les plus réputées d'Europe. Un orchestre de cent musiciens, d'une homogénéité, d'une sonorité remarquables, était conduit par M. Von Schuch, l'éminent capellmeister qui, depuis plus de trente ans, préside aux destinées de l'Opéra de Dresde. Il a conduit cette partition, d'une difficulté inouïe avec une sûreté, une souplesse et une ardeur réellement admirables.

M. Burrian chantait Hérode, dessinant le rôle en une curieuse silhouette de despote maladif et inquiet ; il a osé le pousser par moment jusqu'au grotesque et a reconstitué ainsi la figure saisissante que l'auteur avait conçue.

Mme Wittich n'a pas le physique qui convient à Salomé, mais a chanté le rôle avec une expression si intense, avec une chaleur si persuasive, qu'elle est parvenue à donner l'illusion d'une Salomé idéale. Jochanaan, c'était M. Perron, bien connu des habitués de Bayreuth, qui apprécie son expérience et son autorité. Le Quintette des Juifs — un épisode remarquable de la pièce — a été rendu à la perfection par des artistes de premier ordre, qui ont consenti à jouer ces personnages secondaires. Il est vrai que ce morceau est d'une telle complexité musicale que seuls des chanteurs de grande valeur pouvaient l'exécuter ainsi.

Une mise en scène d'un goût parfait, des éclairages judicieusement réglés, un décor d'une ingénieuse poésie, du talent de M. Rieck, complétaient l'attrait du spectacle.

Robert Brussel.







It would be hard to find a sadder book than that which Oscar Wilde wrote in Reading Gaol, 'De Profundis'.

Months afterwards he receives the book of paper, and he begins to write down, first in disjointed periods, afterwards with increasing fluency and sustained development, the thoughts which were clamorous for speech.

meanings for him either. He does not regret anything that he has done, save that unlovely appeal to the social law. He is a born anti-sonneteer, he says, and knows that nothing that so does matters, but only what he is.

March 10, 1905

THE DRAMA IN BERLIN BY WILLIAM ARCHER.

England and Russia (but mainly England) hold the bill, to the entire exclusion of Germany, at the Kleines Theater.

What, now, of the modern German drama? Much as I admire and value the rich dramatic literature which has sprung up during the past seventeen or eighteen years, I must own that I cannot view without a little disquietude the present position of affairs.

During my week in Berlin I saw two modern German plays—"Das Blumenboot," by Sudermann, and "Brigitte," by Frank Wedekind—the former a new play, running almost (but not quite) without interruption at the Lessing Theater, the latter played for one night as a repertory-piece at the Deutsches Theater.

Shakespeare, Schiller, Ibsen, Wilde, Shaw, Gorky held the stage on every hand, but when we should have seen no so-called "modern," but a few of the really old-fashioned as "An Ideal Husband."

THE LAST OF OSCAR WILDE. From The London Sphere. A report has recently been published to the effect that Mr. Oscar Wilde is still alive—the kind of rumor that frequently surrounds any man in whose life there is a bit of mystery.

Since the absurd report of Mr. Wilde being still alive appeared in the papers I have received 32 letters from different sources asking me if the report were true.

ABOUT THE THEATRE. THE DRAMA IN BERLIN.—III. BY WILLIAM ARCHER.

An ideal husband. It seemed odd to come to Berlin to see a play which was, in character, so essentially old-fashioned as "An Ideal Husband."

It seemed odd to come to Berlin to see a play which was, in character, so essentially old-fashioned as "An Ideal Husband." Here, if you like, is Sardou, and not very good Sardou either!

THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM. But what of the economics of these "Kammerspiele"? At a rough calculation, I make out that supposing every seat to be sold at the series of 48 performances, the total receipts cannot be more than about \$5,000, which gives about \$750 for each production.

THE DRAMA IN BERLIN.—IV. Ibsen in Berlin. Ibsen is the only dramatist who can compete with Shakespeare in power of prevalence on the Berlin stage.

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March 31, 1905

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profoundly felt; but effective it certainly was, except in the case of the burning of Lovborg's manuscript, when a departure from the "honesty" prescribed by the poet was, as usual, disastrous.

It would be hard to find a sadder book than that which Oscar Wilde wrote in Reading Gaol, De Profundis.\* The sadness grows as the pages become more cheerful; for the tragedy deepens. There are some who refuse to take the book seriously. One critic has said that Wilde never was in the deep, was incapable of it, and therefore could not cry out of the deep. To me, as I read, sincerity speaks from every page. But the adverse judgment is not surprising. It is quite in the way of the Philistine to refuse to believe in the artist's sincerity. And this fellow, above all! This inveterate practitioner in the art of pose! Here he is, posing to himself as usual in his prison-cell, and writing himself down, as soon as he has the privilege of paper and ink, that he may afterwards pose before the world. It is a facile judgment.

For there is much of pose in the book. But then all that would be odiously artificial and insincere in the good stolid Philistine is the natural expression of this man's innermost self. I call him an artist. He was a true artist. Such writing as he gave to the world, when at his best, is consummate art. It was marred, to be sure, by an occasional catastrophic lapse from good taste, which is one of the puzzles of his character; he flings an ornament just where perfect simplicity is needed. But what ornament it is! And how lightly it rides, even when least in place, on the surface of thought; how perfectly it fits, when it is in place at all, the thought underlying! He was a true artist. But his failure lay where he least suspected it, in the fact that he was not an artist all through. Art is never self-centred. The artist looks out of himself to something far greater than himself, seizes it as no other man can, and gives it expression both for himself and for other men. Many great artists have been notably small and mean in themselves; had they turned their attention on themselves, their art would have been small and mean—nay, there would have been no art at all, but only a dreary presentment of dreary nature. I do not think we should care much for a portrait of himself, unidealised, by Burns; there is enough and to spare in "Willie brewed a peck o' maut." Imagine Turner painting his own surroundings. Now Oscar Wilde was more interested in himself than in anything else in the world.

Posing was therefore natural to him, and did not in the least hinder sincerity. But what about art? Having great artistic powers, he made the intolerable mistake of directing them upon himself. His cry out of the deep begins with the recognition of this blunder. He had tried to make his own life a work of art, and the result was utter failure. It is true that he does not recognise more than a small part of the reason for the failure, but the fact is borne in upon him irresistibly. He had meant to make his life a harmony of refined pleasures. To accentuate them he had made experiment of the grossly sensual, but he hints—and the hint is full of interest—that he had handled this lightly, not in the vulgar way that his accusers imagined: it was the tentative discord that was to be resolved, the muck, if you will, out of which the blossom of a flower-like life was to spring. He was to stand before the world a symbolic man, the eponymous master of a consummate culture. Such was his aim. Now picture this man on a certain day as he describes himself: handcuffed, in hideous convict garb, standing under a November drizzle on the platform at Clapham Junction, where for one whole half-hour frequent trains disgorge their vulgar load, first to look with gaping curiosity at the gaol-bird and then, when it is buzzed about who he is, to break out into open jeers. What is wanting to the agony? The place, the sky, the circumstances, are all perfectly adapted to make his misery extreme. Say that this man was not in the deep!

A year passes over him; a year of prison life, or rather of death—a death that will not be ended. His one consuming desire has been for that end. Why has he not forced it? Surely the means are not wanting. Of this he tells nothing; but I venture on a conjecture. That reverence for the human body as the most beautiful thing in the world, which was so marked a feature of his artistic creed—a reverence utterly unlike that which honours the temple of the Holy Ghost, but having affinities even with this, and better at least than the hatred of the fakir for his tortured frame—this reverence may have stayed the hand of destruction. I could as soon imagine Oscar Wilde breaking an exquisite vase, because it had been put to some vile use, as destroying his own body because of its vile surroundings. He survived one year of unutterable misery. Then comes a change, and he begins to find

utterance. Months afterwards he receives the boon of paper, and he begins to write down, first in disjointed periods, afterwards with increasing fluency and sustained development, the thoughts which were clamorous for speech.

And what is the change? He discovered something in himself. It was a great thing. He was not himself great; he was vastly smaller even than he supposed, for he clung pathetically to the idea that he was a great personage in literature; but by a paradox familiar to some, though strange to him, he found within himself a thing far greater than himself. It was Humility.

He describes the discovery in words of exquisite grace, and, as I declare, of perfect sincerity. He found that he had no quarrel with the world, none with the society which had trampled him underfoot, none with himself—here the deeper tragedy begins—save on the one score that when attacked in the first instance he had appealed to social law for protection, he who had lived to defy social law. Even so he bowed to the justice of the result; the social law struck him down. His contentment was not a contentment of pride, for it began with gratitude for an act of kindness. I do not envy the man who can read with dry eyes the story of the prisoner brought to the Bankruptcy Court for his public examination, and of the friend who took his stand in that dreary corridor "that, before the whole crowd, whom an action so sweet and simple hushed into silence, he might gravely raise his hat to me as, handcuffed and with bowed head, I passed him by."

The contentment was not then of pride; it was of humility. And this was a new thing to Oscar Wilde. The word had no meaning for him before; now he knew the reality. And he found it wrapped up with suffering. This again was a thing which he knew indeed after a fashion, but which he had resolutely put away from himself as ugly and shameful. Now he discovered it to be of supreme beauty. To suffer with humility is to know the good of life.

Hence a marvel. I have said that an artist's work must be cramped and small, poor and mean, if he be intent on himself. Now this work of Oscar Wilde, this cry de profundis, deals wholly with himself, and yet it is an almost flawless work of art. How can this be? It is because he is intent, not upon himself for himself, but upon himself as the shrine of that far greater thing than himself—humility in suffering. Do not imagine that you are to find here a conversion. The thought occurs to him that some reader may be expecting this, and he shrinks from the vulgarity. Do not expect to find a new style in the man; his artistic method was long since formed, and remains intact. You must look for a graceful impertinence of phrase, and you will find it. He has a new subject, but he treats it in the old way. His new experience leads him to study with new interest a personality which had long before fascinated him. Christian, bear with him; have patience with the Oscar Wilde of old days who always considered "the young Galilean peasant" one of the most charming figures of romance, delighting above all in Renan's "Fifth Gospel," and finding in the Sermon on the Mount the most delicate suggestions of the artistic temperament. Bear with him, I say; for he has hold of one thread in the strand of truth, and you will not be surprised to find that in his prison cell he makes a new discovery of the Man of Sorrows. Have patience with him still; for he cannot speak even now without a flavour of impertinence. The man and the style are one. If he wrote otherwise, you might begin to doubt his sincerity. You will have need of all your patience. And yet you may read not without profit.

He grows cheerful in his humility. And now begins the tragedy in grim earnest. We have had only the prologue so far. It would seem that this most artistic man is to have his life cast in the end into artistic mould. He is to enact a tragedy. And according to the law of tragedy he must be unconscious of the approaching catastrophe; he must meet it with renewed hopes. He builds a whole palace of expectation out of his new discovery. He has found in himself the material for consummate works of art. He has discovered the meaning, the beauty of life. He is not converted; he scorns the thought. He is still himself; his artistic powers are returning in full flood; he can find expression. And now he has what he never had before, something worthy of expression. He has found it in the deep. He is content. To him there is no crying of deep to deep: there is no answering height. Religion has no meaning for him, he says with growing cheerfulness; if such things must be, he would have a religion especially designed for those who cannot believe, an altar without tapers, where a priest without hope Jissen Women's University Library bread and a wineless cup. Morality has no

meaning for him either. He does not regret anything that he has done, save that unlucky appeal to the social law. He is a born anti-nomian, he says, and knows that nothing that he does matters, but only what he is. Has he then forgotten that shrewd discovery of the earlier days of sorrow, "that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that what one has done in the secret chamber one has some day to cry aloud on the housetop." It seems to be fading away before his new cheerfulness. During his first year in prison he could do nothing else but wring his hands in impotent despair, crying, "What an ending, what an appalling ending!" Now he cried, "What a beginning, what a wonderful beginning!" Men had pointed to him as showing whither the artistic life led: he would do such work in the future, carved out of his sufferings, that he might cry in triumph, "Yes! this is just where the artistic life leads a man."

Did no voice cry to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee!" After his imprisonment, Oscar Wilde wrote the Ballad of Reading Gaol, and then died. Ring down the curtain; let us go in silence.

VIATOR.

March 10, 1905

March 31, 1905

THE WAY

Et tu, Brute

"HERE is the Guardian handing me the sheet, steady-goer to say?" "Some wholesome truths Oscar Wilde," he said, passage. "Nonsense," I replied, might call me a clever nastiest things you can't be referring to me. half of enthusiastic eulogy of his book.' I don't rec. He must be speaking of,

all doors were closed against a last I passed a Civil Service exam obtained a post, but was offered time a clerkship with a solicitor the latter, as it enabled me to and remain in contact with foot's students and the clergy tract. We, though in a measure surroundings, are, nevertheless, the environment. I regard the help of the clergy and student real compensation for the last School career. I fully recognize of Newman's reply in answer to "Which has most influence on ing or residence?" Residence rated. I had a high appreciation and general culture, ears ever eager to hear and see how man talked and conducted himself splendid opportunity is afforded who lives near a staff of clergy students. Some regarded me as ing specimen of pit life; the girls however, were ready to lend n answer, when they were able, the questions with which I plied the It is not my purpose here to s young Churchman can raise a of language and manner, and sneers and ridicule turned into thankful to say I never left Su commencing to teach at the age and afterwards took a Bible-cl men. I passed the Preliminary Exam Incorporated Law Society, but articulated, as I continued to h earlier wish would be fulfilled. twenty-three, I was able to take course at Durham University. dream of Oxford was not realized, economy I was able to stay at years, and then read for the Bisc nation, on £120. I had, by reading aloud with t phonetic dictionary, so far correct trictities of the pit dialect that m not suspected. I had no wish t public school lad. The college c were taken to my humble abode. knowing made no difference in th towards me, those who changed th were not worth knowing. I was ordained deacon by Bisho and priest by Bishop Westcott. B foot advised me to stay in the Dur Bishop Westcott, knowing my training, offered me my present l is a colliery parish with a popula 4,000, some five years ago. I believe that when there is a r desire on the part of any young l Holy Orders, ordinary intelligence thing more than ordinary applicati God's help, result in the desired candidates for Holy Orders. A DUR

LADY DAY AT WINDSOR CATHEDRAL.

THE DEAN OF MARRIAGE AND HO

THE 25th of March, the Feast of ciation, has now for some years be as a great day for prayer, intere

THE WAYFARER.

Et tu, Brute.—CÆSAR.

"HERE is the *Guardian* at you," said Harvey, handing me the sheet. "And what has the steady-goer to say?" I asked indifferently. "Some wholesome truths about your essay on Oscar Wilde," he answered, showing the passage.

"Nonsense," I replied, when I had read; "he might call me 'a clever writer'—it is one of the nastiest things you can say of a man—but he can't be referring to me. 'Two columns and a half of enthusiastic eulogy both of the man and of his book.' I don't recognize the description. He must be speaking of someone else." "Find someone whom it fits better," he said, "and I will agree. He is not the only one who has complained, you know."

"I am beginning to think," I said, "that there are some stupid people about." "And your business," he replied quickly, "is to make yourself intelligible to them, or else to give up writing." "Do you always make your sermons intelligible," I sneered, "to your ironmongers and drapers?" "I do my best," he answered; "at all events, I do not go out of my way to puzzle them. Look at your Russian anarchist again. Yes, I know what you meant, and agree with you; but how many would understand? And why should you want to advertise your connexion with a disreputable affair like the *Cosmopolitan*? I don't know how you can stand it yourself."

This was startling, for Harvey is no pharisee in respect of the company he keeps. I did not, however, try a retort. "But remember," I pleaded lazily, "that I am a professed wayfarer. I go through the world studying men and their cities." "And their *mores*," he added bitterly; "that, I suppose, is why you study Oscar Wilde, if he could be called a man."

I know my friend's feeling on the subject, and I respect it. Therefore I said nothing, and he returned to his theme with a less caustic manner.

"I really don't know how you could write about him at all without strong condemnation. Of course, what this man says about 'enthusiastic eulogy' is nonsense. But how could you deal so gently with the man and the book?" I broke in: "How would you treat a notorious bully if you found him lying in the street with a shattered limb? Would you show respect for his splintered bones and torn tissue? Or would you toss him roughly into a cart, with a special twist of the broken leg?"

"The parable is beside the mark," he said; "your man was not lying wounded and helpless; he was rather cock-a-hoop, riding the high horse." "O that is your grievance, is it?" I replied; "You agree with those who say that he was not in the deep at all." "He was once in the deep, I grant you," answered Harvey; "but the man you dealt with was not the poor wretch eating his heart in prison; he was the author, dead of course, but still the author of an impertinent, impenitent book, which is rushing through edition after edition." "Oh, that is your grievance, is it?" I repeated; "The facts do beget envy. My books struggle painfully through one edition." "I don't write books," he retorted, "and so I am not stirred by envious comparisons; but it does stir my gall to see such a man treated as the hero of a tragedy."

"Ah! that looks like the real grievance," I protested; "and do you agree with the critic who thought that I was treating an artist as superior to ordinary morality?" "I don't make that blunder," he replied more gently, "but I ask myself why you, with your austere code of ethics—yes, you are austere—dealt so tenderly with a man who flouted all morality." "And is it not possible," I argued, "that my austerity, on which you insist, would make me deal more sternly with a solemn pretender to morality than with a frothy artist who scouts morality?" "Possibly," he agreed, "but what about the frothy artist as a hero of tragedy?"

"Wait a moment," I pleaded; "You say that he was impertinent. That is what I called him. You say that he was impenitent. That is what I said. You allow that he was once in the deep; how do you conceive that he got out of it?" "By a balloon filled with his own gas," suggested Harvey. "Which burst and let him down again," I continued; "there may be something in that; and I believe Icarus has been made a subject of tragedy. But I would rather say that he was never out of the deep at all. He lighted up the abyss with fairy lamps, and told himself that he was walking in sunshine. Now for the tragedy." "It sounds more like a pantomime," said Harvey.

"Oh," I cried, "you must have a high-souled, stainless hero, entangled in the chain of destiny. That may be good Greek poetics, especially if you leave out Euripides, but it seems to me not very Christian. Or would you say that there is no tragedy in *Macbeth*, or in the dismal *Hamlet*, or in the ruin of *Lear*,

the ill-tempered, exacting old fool? Perhaps you do not believe that of our pleasant vices we make whips to scourge us, or do not think such scourging the stuff of tragedy. I am content with what the great masters have chosen. But I see in Oscar Wilde's book a deeper tragedy than any they have written, or none of them dare go very far into the secret of spirit. If ever God spoke to a human soul in our days He spoke to this Oscar Wilde in Reading Gaol. Some readers of the book may be furious at the idea; but you should not be; you are no pharisee. If ever the gospel of the glory of Christ dawned on a man, it dawned on that crushed, remorseful, impenitent, despairing sinner, when he discovered the grace of humility and the beauty of suffering. And having received this gift, what did he make of it? I have told the damning truth about the man, that he had tried to make his own life—all muck and emptiness—a work of art. Other men have sinned as deeply as he, and have hated their sin, treading it in anger, and trampling it in fury. For him it was a thing to be delicately tasted: not to be allowed to master him, of course, but to be touched lightly as one of many sensations. The habit was formed, and it prevailed. When the heavenly vision came, what did he make of it? He seized it eagerly as new material for artistic work. Is not that a sufficiently tragic failure? His place in hell is not among the sensuous, but rather in the company of him who made *il gran rifiuto*. Do you remember your complaint of John Inglesant, that Shorthouse had not the courage to make him pay the full price for his refusal of the divine call? I did not agree with you, because comedy is as true to life as tragedy, and as divine. But you can make no comedy out of Oscar Wilde. He caught a glimpse of the catastrophe himself: it would be a horrible tragedy, he said, if he did not live to do the new artistic work that was become possible for him. But he put the thought away: he would do this work. The catastrophe came swiftly. 'Ring down the curtain,' I said, 'and let us go home in silence.' You do not wish always to show the end of the catastrophe on the stage—the murders, the desolation. At least you do not show the victims going down to the pit. I had no wish, and no need, to enlarge on those last sordid months at Paris, or the poor farce of a death-bed reconciliation to the Church. Others have done this with unction. To my mind, the failure was complete before he left his prison; the harvest of tragedy was gathered when he made his choice. The rest was but gleanings."

I did not say all this to Harvey exactly as it is here set down. Our conversation is more vernacular, and I reached my end through many interruptions. But I give the substance. We parted, as we seldom do, in disagreement.

VIATOR.

## THE DRAMA IN BERLIN

BY WILLIAM ARCHER.

## II.—SUDERMANN AND WEDEKIND.

What, now, of the modern German drama? Much as I admire and value the rich dramatic literature which has sprung up during the past seventeen or eighteen years, I must own that I cannot view without a little disquietude the present position of affairs.

During my week in Berlin I saw two modern German plays—"Das Blumenboot," by Sudermann, and "Erdegeist," by Frank Wedekind—the former a new play, running almost (but not quite) without interruption at the Lessing Theater, the latter played for one night as a repertory-piece at the Deutsches Theater. So far as I know, these were the only modern German plays of any note performed during my stay in Berlin. This was partly, no doubt, a mere chance. A few days earlier I might have seen Hauptmann's "Fuhrmann Hentschel" at the Lessing Theater; a few days later Hartleben's "Rosenmontag" was to be played at the same theatre; and at the Deutsches Theater a new play by a new author was announced for production. Still, I could not but see something symptomatic in the great preponderance of old over new, of foreign over native work, in the bills of the leading theatres.

Shakespeare, Schiller, Ibsen, Wilde, Shaw, Gorky held the stage on every hand, but where were Max Halbe, George Hirschfeld, and others of that brilliant younger generation which came to the front in the early nineties? Where were Arthur Schnitzler and Hugo von Hofmannsthal? Where were even the men of smaller intellectual pretensions—Otto Ernst, Max Dreyer, Philippi, Fulda, Beyerlein? It seemed to me undeniable, in the first place, that some of the young geniuses of the 'nineties had proved sad disappointments—one-play men, with no stamina or power of development. In the second place, I could not but feel that cosmopolitanism was being overdone, and that the young men were wandering after strange gods, to the neglect of—I will not say native genius—but native talent.

# THE LAST OF OSCAR WILDE.

From The London Sphere.

A report has recently been published to the effect that Mr. Oscar Wilde is still alive—the kind of rumor that frequently surrounds any man in whose life there was an element of mystery. In this connection a portrait of Mr. Wilde's grave appeared in "The Tatler" for July 19, and I have received from Mr. Robert Ross, who, it will be remembered, recently edited "De Profundis" for publication, the following letter dated Reform Club, July 20:

Since the absurd report of Mr. Wilde being still alive appeared in the papers I have received 378 letters from different sources asking me if the report were true. Perhaps you will make known to those interested in the subject the following facts:

At the time of his death Mr. Wilde owed a considerable sum of money to Paris tradespeople, who out of regard for a fallen and distinguished man (contrary to all French instincts) had given him considerable credit. When nursing him during his last illness he asked me, as one of his most intimate friends, that in the event of his death I should endeavor to see that those who had been kind to him were paid. Instead of raising difficulties, as they might easily have done, the French creditors, directly he was dead, accepted without any demur my personal promise that they would be paid in course of time. For a foreigner to die in Paris when he is registered at the hotel under an assumed name is one of the most expensive luxuries in the world, and Wilde's body was very nearly taken to the Morgue. His illness had been a great expense to his friends and there was really no money to buy a suitable plot of ground for his grave. It also occurred to me, and to the friend who was with him at the last, that it would be in bad taste to spend a large sum of money on his grave and funeral expenses until the French creditors, who had shown more than human charity, were fully compensated. I therefore hired a plot of ground at Bayneux and placed a simple stone over the place, and I pay a rent to the French government for the use of a "concession temporaire." It shocks a great many visitors to Bayneux to learn that the grave is only a temporary one. But two-thirds of the French creditors have been satisfied, and by next year Wilde's last wishes will have been carried out. I shall then move the remains to a permanent resting place at Père la Chaise, and a suitable monument will be erected over them. I receive numerous letters expressing astonishment at the fact that the grave at Bayneux and the fact that it is only a temporary one, but I have given you the reason. I venture to think that no one who knows the circumstances will think that I should have followed any other course.

# ABOUT THE THEATRE.

BY WILLIAM ARCHER.

## THE DRAMA IN BERLIN.—III.

England and Russia (but mainly England) hold the bill, to the entire exclusion of Germany, at the Kleines Theater. This is rather a hall than a theatre, seating scarcely more than 300 people. Access to it is gained by a single staircase, opening from Unter den Linden. What the County Council would say to this arrangement I do not know—or rather I do know. Nor is one re-assured, on entering, to find that the walls of the auditorium are entirely lined with painted canvas. The hall is as nearly as possibly square, and is painted to represent (vaguely) the interior of an ancient temple. Grottesque masks hang at intervals from the cornice, and wreaths of incense-smoke are shown ascending from tripods and eddying round the walls. The whole effect of this eccentric decoration is grey, chill, and unpleasant. Meanwhile the proscenium of the wide and low stage represents the portico of the temple, illogically turned inwards, as though in a fit of architectural introspection. I fancy (though I may be wrong) that this scheme of decoration was chosen as being in some way appropriate to Oscar Wilde's "Salome," which was produced at the Little Theatre. The plays I saw at it were "The Ideal Husband" and "You Never Can Tell." Gorky's "Nachtsyl" ("The Lower Depths") I was unable to see, though it was performed once or twice during my stay in Berlin.

### "AN IDEAL HUSBAND."

It seemed odd to come to Berlin to see a play which we, in England, should hold so essentially old-fashioned as "An Ideal Husband." Here, if you like, is Sardou, and not very good Sardou either! Why should the critics allow Oscar Wilde to steal the horse, while Sudermann may not even look over the hedge? Of course the answer lies in the different pretensions of the two authors. "Das Blumenboot" is a vast and serious "machine" put forward at one of the leading literary theatres of Berlin; "Ein idealer Gatte" is a light, unpretending trifle produced by way of pastime at a theatre mainly devoted to exotic experiment. It was melancholy, after all these years, to hear the well-remembered paradoxes and epigrams trying in vain to trip it gaily in an uncongenial tongue. Could their author have foreknown that his wit was destined to survive, not in English or in French, but in German, he would probably have seen in the fact the ultimate irony of Fate. And, apart from tragic memories, the performance of the first act was, in itself, melancholy enough. The guests at Lady Chiltern's reception all comported themselves as though there were a death in the house. I am told that this is the German idea of reproducing the manners of the British Aristocracy—the repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. In the later acts, things brightened up a bit. Herr Harry Walden, who played Viscount Goring (Mr. Charles Hawtreys part), is a clever, quiet, incisive comedian, with nothing at all of Mr. Hawtreys touch-and-go irresponsibility. Seen in profile, with his eye-glass screwed into his eye, he rather resembled a youthful Mr. Chamberlain. Comic enough, to an English observer, was his transference to Lord Goring of that German ideal of "deportment" which consists in standing with your body bent forward from the waist, and letting your white-gloved hands hang straight down in front of you, as though they and your arms were inert sandbags over which you had no control. But this superficial absurdity is inseparable from the attempts of one nation to represent the manners of another. How ludicrous must English performances of "Magda," or "Lights Out" appear in German eyes!

### SHAW AND DICKENS.

"Man kan nie wissen" went a great deal more gaily than "Ein idealer Gatte," as, indeed, a farce would naturally go more gaily than a drawing-room drama. It was surprising how readily the audience rose to Mr. Shaw's whimsicality, except where, in the last act, it positively runs mad. The scene of the family council had a distinctly refrigerating effect; but otherwise the piece went nearly as well at the Kleines Theater as at the Court. The part which suffered most was that of the waiter, the immortal William; it was not very well played, and its humour seldom got over the footlights. Herr Walden was better suited to the part of the dialectical dentist than to that of Lord Goring; and two of the minor parts—the cantankerous father and the K.C.—were at least as well played as they ever have been in England. On the other hand, the Terrible Twins came off but passably, and though the Gloria was an able actress, we had to take her youth and inexperience somewhat on credit. The performance I saw was the fifteenth or thereabouts; but from the way the piece went I should judge it likely to have a good run, passed its seventieth performance, and still to be quite efficiently run.

It is an idea in Berlin that "An Ideal Husband" runs rampant in England. The decoration of Lord Goring's chambers suggested a Viennese upholsterer's show-room at an international exhibition.

Another piece of English origin of which I saw a portion was "Klein Dorrit," by Herr F. von Schönthan, at the Royal Theatre. But truly it had little enough to do with Dickens. The Father of the Marshalsea was tolerably reproduced, and excellently acted by Herr Vollmer; but Dickens's tender, elegiac heroine became a notable, bustling, strong-minded young woman, much given to boxing the ears of those who displeased her, and not at all disinclined to aid and abet her father in his cadging for "testimonials." In the second act, a gentleman announcing himself as "Baronet Georges Sparkler" made his appearance, accompanied by a fiery Spanish-American wife, "Lady Inez Sparkler." Their business I did not wait to ascertain, but stole away—not without a secret tremor lest one of the gorgeous flunkys pervading the corridors might arrest me for lèse majesté. The production of such a play as "Klein Dorrit" shows how completely the Schauspielhaus stands outside the literary movement.

### IBSEN IN BERLIN.

Ibsen is the only dramatist who can compete with Shakespeare in point of prevalence on the Berlin stage. Four of his plays are at present in the current repertory—played, that is to say, not every night, but two or three times a week. One is "Lady Inger of Oestraat," at the Schiller Theater—an immensely popular East End playhouse. The other three—"The Wild Duck," "Rosmersholm," and "Hedda Gabler"—are drawing large audiences at the Lessing Theater, the director of which, Dr. Brahm, tells me that he contemplates an Ibsen Cycle, to include all the poet's modern plays. I was fortunate enough to see "The Wild Duck" and "Hedda Gabler," both quite admirably mounted and performed. The Hjalmar Ekdal of Herr Albert Bassermann slightly disappointed me. It lacked the sublime simplicity which is Hjalmar's chief characteristic. The actor tried to do too much with the part: he played with it, instead of letting it play itself. The beginning of wisdom for an Ibsen actor is, "Never do anything that is not clearly set down for you, or cannot be necessarily inferred from what is set down." On the other hand four of the characters in "The Wild Duck" were quite perfectly acted. The Gina of Frau Else Lehmann was as good as that which Frau Rosa Bertens gave us at the Great Queen Street Theatre, last season—better it could not be. Fräulein Ida Orloff was a delightful Hedwig; Herr Hans Marr played Dr. Relling as a burly, bearded, spectacled Bohemian, and made the character absolutely real and convincing; and Herr Oscar Sauer's Gregers Werle was one of the very ablest pieces of acting I ever saw—a great effect, and an absolutely right effect, being attained by perfect simplicity of means. In "Hedda Gabler," too, the excellence of Herr Sauer's Judge Brack stood out conspicuously. The other parts were well, but not brilliantly played. One missed in Herr Rudolf Rittner's Eilert Lövborg the suggestion of a certain bygone romantic attractiveness, which surely belongs to the part. Hedda could never, even in imagination, have seen this Lövborg "with vine-leaves in his hair." Hedda's sister, Mrs. Triesch was superficially effective rather than

profoundly felt; but effective it certainly was, except in the scene of the burning of Lövborg's manuscript, where a departure from the "business" prescribed by the poet was, as usual, disastrous.

### A SUBSCRIPTION THEATRE.

Before closing these hasty notes I must say something of a very interesting experiment which Director Reinhardt, of the Deutsches Theater, has in view. Immediately adjoining the theatre he already occupies, he is building a new theatre for a series of what he calls "Kammerspiele"—"chamber performances" in the sense in which we speak of "chamber music." The theatre, luxuriously appointed, is to accommodate an audience of only 200. On the other hand, the revolving stage is very large, and will admit of every sort of scenic effect. Subscribers alone are to be admitted to these performances. Between October and March eight productions are promised: (1) Ibsen's "Ghosts," with Frau Sorma as Mrs. Alving and Herr Reinhardt himself as Engstrand; (2) "Frank Wedekind's New Work"—(it is reported that this means Wedekind's hitherto unacted "child tragedy" entitled "Frühlings Erwachen," or "Stirrings of Spring," but I find it difficult to believe that this series of scenes can be actable, even in Berlin); (3) Maeterlinck's "Aglavaine et Sélysette," with Frau Sorma in the former character and Frau Eysoldt in the latter; (4) Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler"; (5) a comedy by Oscar Wilde, said to be "The Importance of Being Earnest"; (6) "Amoureuse," by Porto Riche; (7) "Mensch und Uebermensch," by Bernard Shaw; (8) Lessing's "Emilia Galotti." For admission to first performances the prices are to be 20s. and 15s. For the five repetitions of each production the prices are to range from 15s. to 5s. Pursuing his usual system, Director Reinhardt is entrusting each of the plays in this series to the care of a well-known artist, who is not only to design the scenery and costumes, but to arrange all the effects of light, and to be responsible, in fact, for the whole series of stage pictures. He showed me the designs for "Ghosts" and for "Aglavaine et Sélysette"; and certainly they promise to be most original and beautiful.

### THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM.

But what of the economics of these "Kammerspiele"? At a rough calculation, I make out that supposing every seat to be sold at the series of 48 performances, the total receipt cannot be more than about £6,000, which gives about £750 for each production. How is it possible to pay for the designing and making of scenery and costumes, to meet the rent (or interest on capital), actors' salaries, and other expenses, and to have anything over out of £750? No doubt the "Kammerspiele" can be worked economically in connexion with the Deutsches Theater, and can be employed to "feed" the repertory of that institution; but still I am puzzled to imagine "how it is done." This economic problem, however, arises not only in connexion with the "Kammerspiele," but in connexion with both the literary theatres of Berlin. How do the Deutsches Theater and the Lessing Theater subsist? They have no subvention, yet they exclude long runs (except in very rare instances), and play in the most liberal style a repertory that would do credit to a richly-subventioned theatre. It must not be supposed that salaries are very low or that living is cheap in Berlin. Rents and taxes are very high, provisions very dear. The salaries of leading actors range from £1,000 to £1,300 a year. The regularly-engaged company at the Deutsches Theater numbers some seventy performers. How can such theatres be made self-supporting?

I cannot give a complete answer to the question, but I can suggest some partial explanations. In the first place, it is probable that neither Herr Reinhardt nor Dr. Brahm is so burdened with rent as are their London colleagues. Both theatres, I take it, belong to societies or syndicates who have acquired them with other than purely commercial motives, and are not bent on getting the highest possible interest on their money. Doubtless they are in the main paying institutions; but their proprietors would rather have low interest and good art than let the houses at the highest competition rents to showmen-managers, who would run any "attraction" that promised to pay. Secondly, Berlin managers effect a considerable economy in two ways: their advertising expenses are comparatively trifling, and they have no orchestras to support. In the four theatres I visited I did not hear a single note of entracte music; and oh! it was a relief. Thirdly, Berlin managers secure a high average of attendance at their theatres by making theatre-going somewhat cheaper and very much easier and more comfortable than in England. The dearest seats cost about eight shillings; the silly superstition of "evening dress" is unknown; and in the middle of each performance there is a long entracte, during which almost the whole audience troops into the foyer, where excellent refreshments are to be had at reasonable prices. The result of all this is that the music-halls and variety-shows are not nearly such serious rivals to the theatre in Berlin as they are in London. When will London managers learn to prefer a paying spectator in a morning coat to a dead-head in a white choker?

17 Feb. 1906.

"INTENTIONS"

Oscar Wilde: Intentions. Traduction française de HUGUES REBELL. (Paris: Charles Carrington.)

THE translation into French of Oscar Wilde's "Intentions," done by Hugues Rebell on his death-bed, is accurate and adequate. The only error I have noticed, in a comparison of two or three pages taken at random, is in the rendering of "The horses of Mr. William Black's phaeton do not soar towards the sun. They merely frighten the sky at evening into violent chromolithographic effects."

The prose of Oscar Wilde loses little in translation into French: a certain flash and snap, but hardly more. Delicacies of the emotions and the imagination are what lose most in translation, and of these Wilde had none. His work had resonance, but no music; colour, but no atmosphere; vivid intelligence, but no meditation.

Wilde wrote to astonish, but he wrote out of a ceaselessly active brain, itself genuinely amused by its efforts to amuse. This book of "Intentions" has the stimulus of irresponsible talk. Its pretence at a strict logic is part of the joke, and deceives only those who are meant to be deceived.

To the English reader, the most valuable part of this volume is the interpretation of Wilde hinted at in the fragments of that essay which Hugues Rebell did not live long enough to write. The author of "La Nichina" began his short and too hurried career with the promise of something really vital.

Wilde wrote to astonish, but he wrote out of a ceaselessly active brain, itself genuinely amused by its efforts to amuse. This book of "Intentions" has the stimulus of irresponsible talk. Its pretence at a strict logic is part of the joke, and deceives only those who are meant to be deceived.

"Wilde n'a rien d'achevé. Son œuvre est très intéressante, parce qu'elle est caractéristique d'un temps; elle a une valeur documentaire, mais elle n'a pas de valeur vraiment littéraire. Dans la Duchesse de Padoue il imite Hugo et Sardou, dans le Portrait de Dorian Gray, Huysmans. Intentions est le bréviaire du symbolisme. Les idées que s'y trouvent sont dans Mallarmé, dans Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. Ses poèmes en vers sont inspirés de Swinburne. Les Poèmes en prose sont ce qu'il y a de plus original dans son œuvre; ils représentent assez la causerie du poète, mais comme ils lui sont inférieurs."

All this is true, though it does not say everything, forgetting his finest work, the modern plays, in which alone he becomes a master; and forgetting also many other influences, Pater throughout, and Maeterlinck and the "Tentation de Saint Antoine" in "Salome." But the comparison with Mallarmé is significant:

"Mallarmé a une œuvre très mince, il est vrai, mais qui tout de même existe. Certains vers sont d'une beauté admirable. . . Wilde, par malheur, était esthète avant d'être poète. Il produisait des œuvres comme des gâteaux."

There, it seems to me, the essential thing is said.

Wilde wrote much that was true, new, and valuable about art and the artist. But, in everything that he wrote, he wrote from the outside. He said nothing which had not been said before him, or which was not the mere wilful contrary of what had been said before him. In his devotion to beauty he seemed to have given up the whole world, and yet what was most tragic in the tragedy was that he had never recognised the true face of beauty. He followed beauty, and beauty fled from him, for his devotion was that of the lover proud of many conquests. He was eager to proclaim the conquest, and too hasty to distinguish between beauty and beauty's handmaid. His praise of beauty is always a boast, never an homage. When he attempted to create beauty in words he described beautiful things. "Salome" is a catalogue.

In the comedies, where the talker is at last free to do nothing but talk, we find a genuine thing, a thing of marvellous ingenuity, a thing of unsurpassed cleverness. They add a new, wild grace to the English stage. But, even here, we find only astonishment, not beauty. The Importance of being Earnest is an enchanting game, which one is glad that some one has played to amuse grown-up people. It is better than the best topsyturvydom of Mr. Gilbert; it will survive, with the "Bab Ballads" and the "Ingoldsby Legends."

ARTHUR SYMONS.

THE LITERARY WEEK

MR. J. W. MACKAIL, who succeeds to the Oxford Professorship of poetry, resembles Matthew Arnold, the most illustrious of his predecessors in the chair, in being a Balliol man and a Civil Servant in the Education Department, in which he is Senior Examiner. He was the third of a remarkable trio of Newdigate prize-winners, his two immediate predecessors in the honour being Oscar Wilde and Sir Rennel Rodd, whose early verses may be compared with his in the back numbers of the defunct "Waifs and Strays." Wilde, of course, was much more a wit than a poet, much more clever than inspired. Rodd and Mackail were far more spontaneous singers, though the former imitated Swinburne, while the latter modelled himself on William Morris. The influence of Matthew Arnold, afterwards to reappear in the work of Mr. Laurence Binyon, was just then in abeyance among Oxford poets.

Mr. Mackail's published works are: a translation of the "Aeneid," the "Eclogues" and "Georgics" into Prose; an edition with translation of select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology; "Biblia Innocentium," in which he told for children the story of the Chosen People before and after the coming of Christ; "The Sayings of the Lord Jesus Christ as recorded by His Four Evangelists"; a University Extension Manual on Latin Literature; a much discussed and not altogether successful Life of William Morris, and a translation of the "Odyssey." He was also one of the three poets who together published two volumes of original poetry, called "Love in Idleness" and "Love's Looking Glass."

No doubt it is largely his duties at the Education Office that have prevented Mr. Mackail from quite fulfilling the high expectations which his Oxford contemporaries formed of him. To them it is a disappointment that he gave up to the translation, whether of Homer, Virgil, or Maeterlinck, talents that seemed destined to win distinction, through work of a more original kind. His translations, however, have always been admirable, though, in reproducing the "Odyssey" in the metre of Omar Khayyam, he was making an experiment fore-ordained to comparative failure, the form not being much more suitable to its purpose than the form of, say, "In Memoriam" or a "Bab Ballad." This matter, however, has already been dealt with in our columns. Mr. Mackail's functions, as professor, will be critical, not constructive, and we can trust him to perform them well, even if it is too much to expect him to be as amusing as Matthew Arnold was when he reviewed the poetical excursions of Francis Newman.

The Professorship was founded in 1708 with the proceeds of a legacy bequeathed for that purpose by Henry Birkhead, who, though he first saw the light near St. Paul's, is perhaps best described as a Latin poet. The Professor is elected for five years, and at the end of that period he may be elected for another five, but no one may occupy the chair for more than a decade. The first successful candidate was the Rev. Joseph Trapp, the supposed author of the epigram about the King, who sent a troop of horse to Oxford but books to Cambridge, and till 1857 all the Professors of Poetry were clergymen. In that year, however, Matthew Arnold was appointed, and it is curious to note that since then they have all been laymen. The duties are not onerous. There is a lecture to be given three times a year, the task of looking over University prize essays, and the delivery of a Latin speech biennially. Residence at Oxford is not compulsory, but on the other hand the emoluments of the Professorship are not great.

In the list of twenty-four professors there are many well-known names. Thus, for instance, among the clergymen we find Thomas Warton, Edward Copleston, Milman and Keble. Matthew Arnold, who objected to being called a Professor and to looking over the poems for the "Newdigate," abandoned the post with regret, and was anxious that Browning should take his place. But Browning, with all his virtues, had this fatal defect, that he was not an Oxford man, although the authorities gave him an honorary degree and did all they could to make him one.

After more than a quarter of a century, Sir Francis Burnard retires from the editorship of Punch, full of years, honour—and fun. In those twenty-five years he made great changes in the paper. The most important was this: that whereas under his predecessor Punch definitely took sides in politics, under Sir Francis it regarded all parties as subject to the criticism of the little philosopher with the big nose and the hump. That is not to be taken as a whole. Punch has not been under Sir Francis, but, taken as a whole, Punch has not been under Sir Francis, but, taken as a whole, Punch has not been under Sir Francis, but, taken as a whole, Punch has not been under Sir Francis.

THE GERMAN AND THE FIRST PRODUCTION OF AN OSCAR WILDE PLAY; AND A NEW BALLET.



Guido Ferranti (Herr Konrad Gebhardt). Beatrice (Fräulein Grete Egenolf). (Photograph by H. J. Meissner.)

A SCENE FROM THE FIFTH ACT OF OSCAR WILDE'S TRAGEDY "THE DUCHESS OF PADUA," PRODUCED AT THE GERMAN THEATRE IN HAMBURG: A DUNGEON IN THE PUBLIC PRISON OF PADUA.

"I do not come to ask for pardon now, Seeing I know I stand beyond all pardon. A very guilty, very wicked woman; Enough of that; I have already, Sir, Confessed my sin to the Lords' Justices;

"They would not listen to me: and some said I did invent a tale to save your life, You having trafficked with me: others said That woman played with pity as with men;

"Others that grieve for my slain Lord and husband Had robbed me of my wits: they would not hear me. And, when I swore it on the holy book, They bade the doctor cure me."



THE production of "Salome" this evening draws attention to one of those glaring acts of inconsistency which make England a byword for stupidity and something worse amongst the nations of Europe. Because Salome and Herod, purely historical personages, a record of whose career may be found in any classical history, happen to be mentioned in the Bible, the Lord Chamberlain refuses to give his licence to the play, for the performances of which money may, therefore, not be taken at the doors.

By the simple expedient, however, of selling seats beforehand to people, who by the act of purchasing them become subscribers to a Society, the performance takes place over the Lord Chamberlain's head. On the other hand, for the last two years and more anyone who has chosen to buy a ticket for "Everyman" has been able to witness the impersonation not of a mere historical character, but of the Deity Himself. The whole difference appears to be that because morality-plays were written before the Lord Chamberlain's authority came into being their performance is perfectly lawful, while the Lord Chamberlain's office vetoes plays in which the same characters are reproduced if they are written by modern authors. For the same reason, words are spoken in Shakspeare which would never be tolerated if the Censor had them submitted to him in a modern work.

MORNING POST, 31/7/05

Richard Strauss's new opera "Salomé," founded on Oscar Wilde's play of that name, will, it is stated, be produced at the Theatre Royal, Turin, in the course of the coming winter. Curiously enough the principal part in this work will be undertaken by an artist whose name is Madame Salomé Krusceniska.

Daily Telegraph, Oct. 21, 1905

Our Vienna Correspondent informs us that all idea of a performance in that city of Richard Strauss's new opera, "Salomé," the libretto of which had been adapted from Oscar Wilde's drama, has been abandoned. The work had been fully rehearsed, and was to have been produced early in November at the Opera House, but the censor, whose approval of the libretto is necessary ere any performance can be given, has withheld his sanction, on the ground that the drama is opposed to morality and religion, and consequently not suitable for the Court theatres.

The Star, 29 Sept. 1905

Nov. 20 is now spoken of as the date of the production of Strauss's "Salomé" at Dresden. The chief parts will be sung by Frau Wittich, Herr Burrian, and Herr Perron. A writer in a Dresden paper, who is not only an enthusiast but has seen the piano score, speaks of it as being quite as much a new departure in musical expression as "Tristan" was in its own day. We shall see.

Oct. 31, 1905

Our Vienna Correspondent writes: As I have already reported, Strauss's new opera, "Salomé," has been refused by the Censor of the Court theatres on account of the immoral character of Oscar Wilde's libretto. The director of the Opera, Gustav Mahler, who is extremely anxious that Strauss's new opera should not be lost to Vienna, has addressed a petition to the Censor asking that permission may be granted to revise the objectionable text-book. It is

believed that this request will be entertained. The figure of John the Baptist will probably receive another name, and so the character be made to lose its Biblical connection. It is recalled that the "Eugénie" was originally rejected by the Censor and then allowed to appear on the stage in a changed form.