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Oscar Wilde
Scrapbook

Vol. 4

The Era:

Jan: 19.

1895.

NOT only has the stage lost a skilled actor in Mr Royce Carleton, but theatrical society has to regret an always amusing companion, a teller of stories of extraordinary verve and humour. Of late years Mr Carleton had acted chiefly in the United States, whither he had accompanied Mr Willard on three successive tours; and his constant theme was American living, American customs, and American manners—all of which he denounced, in a purely humorous spirit and with astonishing wealth of exaggeration, though in more serious moments he was fond of dwelling on the new and improved hospitality he had met with across the Atlantic.

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AMONGST those present at the first night of *King Arthur* at the Lyceum Theatre on Saturday were Mr and Mrs Arthur Lewis, Mrs Morris (Miss Florence Terry), Mr and Mrs Fred Terry, Miss Marion Terry, Mr Gordon Craig, Miss Ailsa Craig, Mr Bancroft, Mr John Hare, Mr Henry Irving, jun., Mrs Patrick Campbell, Mr F. C. Burnand, Mrs Charles Mathews, Mr and Mrs Pinero, and Mr Hall Caine. After the fall of the curtain Mr Irving entertained a large party at supper on the stage, Mr and Mrs George Alexander, Mr and Mrs Cyril Maude being amongst the large and fashionable assembly which accepted Mr Irving's hospitality.

It is a splendid chance for empty phrases. One is tempted to avoid criticism of "Faust" and the acting, by spinning words about the tour in America and the wonderful welcome home again. It is so easy to talk of the great heart of the people which has gone out to our leading actor, and to express gratification that America, which failed to understand "L'Enfant Prodigue," and looks upon "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" as a *succès de scandale*, has poured its dollars into Mr. Irving's treasury. Canada, too, one may say, has been lavish. The stage mounting also will serve as a convenient and not wholly irrelevant matter.

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P.M.B.
Nov. 1.
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"La Femme de Claude" was written just after M. Dumas fils had written his famous "Tue-la" pamphlet, in which he put forward the proposition that the only thing to do with a thoroughly vicious woman is to kill her. As often happens when people write books and plays to prove theories, he has not succeeded in proving anything, for Césarine is killed, not on account of the misery and evil that her sexual viciousness has caused, but because she attempts a purely nonsexual crime. Augier's "Le Mariage d'Olympe," in which some straining persons have found an anticipation of "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," is really a more logical development of M. Dumas' thesis.

However, whether it is logically related to the pamphlet or not, whether it is right to call it a "problem play," or wrong to use the author's term "symbolic," it is a powerful, deeply interesting work, faulty in technique because of the gross disproportion of the acts and ineffectiveness of the last act, yet wise in many aspects, witty at times, and thoroughly human.

Madame Bernhardt, as Césarine, has a part which gives her one great scene—that in which she tries to make her husband take her again to his heart—and she played it splendidly, yet with a curious restraint, for she hardly displayed the fascination powers that have had wonderful effect in some of her parts. It enables her also to show finely the rare gift she has—and only the great possess it—of being silently interesting. M. Guityry gave an admirable performance in the trying part of Claude. The Cantagnac of M. Deval, though not at all like the author's conception of the character, was a very clever piece of work, and Mdlle. Valder played in excellent style the important part of the repentant maid.

The Sketch.
July 25.
1894.

Porcupine
July 21.
1894.

THERE are doubtless many people in Liverpool to whom it is not an easy matter to follow the French language when it is spoken with the speed that is usual on the stage. There are also, without doubt, many who, not having seen *La Tosca*, will take the opportunity of the visit of Madame SARAH BERNHART to form an acquaintance with it. In view of these things it has been suggested to me that I might with advantage to a large number of people print a general outline of the plot, so that the action may be understood, even if the dialogue is not, by those who attend the *matinée* at the Shakespeare Theatre on Friday next. I think the idea is a good one, and have in consequence turned out my old programme to refresh my memory. With the exception of a few minor incidents that have escaped me, the story of *La Tosca* is as follows.

* * * *

THE period of the play is fixed at the commencement of the present century, and M. VICTORIEN SARDOU has chosen Rome as the scene of its enactments. *L'Érta Tosca* is a beautiful *prima donna* in that city at the time of the battle of Marengo, the reading of a despatch from the battlefield being a minor incident of the story in relation to *La Tosca's* engagement to sing before Queen Maria Carolina and her Court. *La Tosca* loves and is loved in return by one Cavaradossi, a young painter, who is aiding the flight and concealment of a friend condemned to death by the odious government of Rome for a political offence to which is attached no shame or disgrace. *Cesare*, the fugitive, is hidden at the bottom of a well in the grounds which surround the dwelling of Cavaradossi, who is so strange and constrained in his manner that *La Tosca's* suspicions are aroused, and becoming jealous she easily convinces herself that her lover has another woman concealed on the premises, and actually discovers the hiding-place. At this point Scarpia, the regent of police, appears upon the scene, and, acting upon *La Tosca's* jealousy, finds out the whereabouts of the

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The Sketch.
July 25.
1894.

Poreupine
July 21.
1894.

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It is a splendid chance for empty phrases. One is tempted to avoid criticism of "Faust" and the acting, by spinning words about the tour in America and the wonderful welcome home again. It is so easy to talk of the great heart of the people which has gone out to our leading actor, and to express gratification that America, which failed to understand "L'Enfant Prodigue," and looks upon "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" as a *succès de scandale*, has poured its dollars into Mr. Irving's treasury. Canada, too, one may say, has been lavish. The stage mounting also will serve as a convenient and not wholly irrelevant matter.

Why, with all this to depend upon, a critic should speak of vital matters, feeling certain, moreover, that his opinions are of the minority, one cannot guess. Yet, somehow, the instinct to speak the truth when it is inconvenient—true badge of a critic—is too strong for successful resistance. It is the custom to pretend that irreverence is a quality of youth; nevertheless, it is the younger critics who protest the loudest against the mutilation of masterpieces. Now, Mr. Wills's "Faust" has one merit—it leads one to re-read Goethe's, and then ingratitude plays promptly a part. Since the "first night" I have gone through the work, purposely choosing a translation—John Anster's—for it would, in any event, be unjust to blame the adapter for the inevitable loss in "throwing the bundle over the river," which is the Aramaic phrase for translating. The result certainly is saddening: the more one loves the original the less one likes the adaptation—there is the complete criticism in a phrase.

As a reporter, I am bound to record that the public was delighted by the revival. The work of the players and those who designed and arranged the wonderful stage pictures certainly deserved warm applause. Mr. Irving was at his best, Miss Ellen Terry at hers, and Mr. William Terriss, I was assured, "excelled himself," which did not seem an astounding performance. Miss M. A. Victor acted with virtuous restraint as Martha, and Mr. Julius Knight, the Valentine, though the flavour of Drury Lane still clings to him, still played effectively. Perhaps we, who have the highest opinion of Mr. Irving, are disappointed that "Faust" has been chosen for revival: and even if we admit that it will be a great success, we are hardly consoled.

The Era
Jan: 19.
1895.

MISS MAY YOHE's marriage with Lord Francis Hope has been made generally known this week. Miss Yohe's many friends and admirers may now congratulate her upon being Lady Hope. The following is a copy of the certificate of marriage, which took place at the Registrar's office at Hampstead on Nov. 27th, 1894. The names of the parties are given as Henry Francis Hope Pelham-Clinton Hope and May Augusta Yohe, and their ages twenty-eight and twenty-five years respectively. Lord Francis Hope is described as "bachelor," and Miss Yohe as "spinster." The residence of both is given as 21, Maresfield-gardens. The name of Lord Francis Hope's father is given as Henry Pelham Alexander Pelham-Clinton (deceased), and his rank "The Duke of Newcastle." Miss Yohe's father is described as William William Yohe, also deceased, "of independent means." The register is signed "Francis P. Clinton-Hope" and "May A. Yohe." The witnesses are "Norah Conway" and "Frank S. N. Isett."

LORD FRANCIS HOPE—who was educated at Eton, took the additional surname of Hope in 1887, and is a lieutenant of the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry Cavalry—is the brother of the present Duke of Newcastle, and is descended from a Baron Clinton of the time of Edward I. Those clergymen who support the "Church and Stage" movement may hope that Lord Francis will live to inherit the dukedom, for then he would become the patron of no less than eight "livings."

LORD FRANCIS was publicly examined in the London Bankruptcy Court, on Thursday, before Mr Registrar Hope, when it was stated that in 1887 he succeeded to life interest in estates at Dorking, in Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, and Castleblayney, Monaghan, Ireland, under the will of his grandmother. The estates now produce about £20,000 a-year, and charges have been given over the whole of the life interests. The gross debts are returned at £657,942 5s. 6d., of which £58,529 is unsecured, and assets £173,920, or a surplus of £115,391 9s. 2d. It appears that since he succeeded to the properties he has lost £70,000 in gambling and betting, £21,610 in theatrical speculation, in connection with the Lyric Theatre he has incurred £45,586 5s. 5d. liabilities, and losses in connection with others, and paid £10,000 minority debts, and £52,704 in living and personal expenditure. There are contingent liabilities to the amount of £446,116 6s. 2d., of which £387,296 has been incurred in connection with the Lancashire, Derbyshire, and Leicestershire Railway, of which he was a director. Of this amount, however, only £13 1s. 8d. is expected to rank. The examination was adjourned.

THE INDEPENDENT THEATRE, LIMITED.

INTERVIEW WITH THE NEW DIRECTOR.

P.M.B.

Nov. 1.

1894.

SOME months ago Mr. J. T. Grein hinted pretty broadly that he was getting tired of running the Independent Theatre at his own expense. It is with quite a chastened surprise, therefore, that one now learns that the concern will in future be the Independent Theatre (Limited), with a capital of £4,500, payable so much on application, so much more on allotment, and the balance as required. Mr. Grein will in future, too, be only half a Cæsar, for he is to have with him as permanent co-director Miss Dorothy Leighton. It was to the more interesting of the two permanent directors that an interviewer went for information.

"You know," said Miss Leighton, "that the Independent Theatre was leading such a hand-to-mouth existence that Mr. Grein was on the verge of throwing it up. There were good prospects for the concern, with certain modifications made, but Mr. Grein did not feel financially strong enough to see it through. He sat down and wrote a letter last August in which he stated that he should have to give it up unless a miracle happened before October 15. He did not post that letter, but kept it in his pocket, like Micawber, to see if anything turned up."

THE INEVITABLE MIRACLE.

"And the miracle happened, of course?"—"Yes. When it is the unexpected which always happens, the miracle is obviously inevitable. I went to see him on October 14, and he was able to tear that letter up. I had never seen him before that day, you must understand. I wrote a play, and submitted it to Mr. Grein, and he wrote and asked me to come and see him. He told me he was not in a position either to accept or to reject my play—which, by-the-by, was a four-act society drama, 'Thyrza Fleming.' He really did not know whether subscriptions would come in voluminously enough to permit the continuance of the Independent Theatre. If he could find a co-director—either a man or a woman—of good standing and literary capacity, he would, he said, be prepared to continue it on the lines of a limited liability company. Well, we talked for a long time, and then he suddenly turned round and said: 'Will you be my co-director?'"

ON A NEW PROBLEM DRAMA.

"Quite like a proposal?"—"Exactly. We went into the matter and —"

"His winning ways coaxed you over?"—"Well, I didn't want much persuasion, and I soon agreed to accept the position, which is an honorary one. Mr. Grein, you know, has 650 founders' shares of £1 each as his sole remuneration. He at once accepted my play, and said he should like to open the season with it, and that is what we have finally arranged."

"I wonder if it is a problem play?"—"Yes, it is a problem play, and although it is somewhat advanced, its note is conciliatory. Nobody, not even Mr. Grein, with all his knowledge of plays, could form the faintest idea of how it ends until the final word is spoken. It keeps the interest up till the absolute end."

"But in a problem play ought not the end to be something irresistible, something one sees coming all the time?"—"What I mean is that the interest is so absorbed that you are in suspense until the last word is uttered; but I can't explain more fully yet. Wait and see it."

"How long shall I have to wait before I can see it, though?"—"We hope to get the capital subscribed at once. Shareholders get certain privileges in the way of first-night seats, and as they have the power to sell those seats, they have the opportunity of recouping themselves at the rate of 12½ per cent., independently of any dividends on the working of the company."

"ISN'T PHILANTHROPY ANY LONGER."

"But you don't want the mere mercenary speculator, do you?"—"Well, the Independent Theatre isn't philanthropy any longer, and they must be believers in the concern, or they will not see the possibility of selling their first-night seats. We hope to get our capital by November 1, and then we shall go to work and open, say, the first week in December, with my play. I am afraid we shall have to take the Royalty, for we must be economical."

"But if the concern is to be no longer philanthropic, will the actors and actresses of note continue to perform at merely nominal fees?"—"We shall only be able to pay nominal salaries, as before, but those who do not like it need not be in the cast. We want to get the clever aspirants. The others can look after themselves."

OTHER PLAYS IN PREPARATION.

“What other plays have you for production?”—“There is one by Mr. William Heinemann, the publisher. Perhaps we should have put that on first, but it is a little too much like what people expect at the Independent Theatre, perhaps. We thought it wise to be as politic as may be in putting meat before babes and sucklings. I should not like to imply at all that my own play is milk and water ; but all the same it is not the strong brandy and soda which Mr. Heinemann’s is. It is a three-act drama, ‘The First Step,’ and I shall not be divulging a confidence when I tell you Mr. Pinero thinks highly of it. However, we are delaying the production of it until the public are a little more attuned to such notes. Then we have another of Mr. George Bernard Shaw’s plays, a comedy by Mr. Hubert Crackanthorpe, Henrik Ibsen’s ‘Lady of the Sea,’ and works by Gerhart Hauptmann and Edward Brandes.”

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"LA FEMME DE CLAUDE."

The lover stood still, waiting for death, the guilty wife was lying dead on the floor, but all that the avenging husband said was "Come along and work." Yet at one time Claude Ruper deeply loved the woman whom he had shot as calmly as if she were a mad dog. Strange to say also, the creature that was killed while attempting a fearful crime against her husband, had made him a sincere declaration of passionate love but an hour before her death.

Some have blamed the man for his daring act of justice, but if a human being can have the right to suppress a fellow-creature he was justified. When Claude Ruper married Césarine, the daughter of Baron de Fieradlen, he was absolutely chaste, and believed her to be a pure young girl. Soon after his marriage he discovered that the wife whom he worshipped had borne an illegitimate child. He might have pardoned her, have forgiven the fraud practised upon him had she shown herself a good mother; but she neglected her poor babe, and when it died rejoiced at the removal of the proof of her fall.

Yet the man did not drive the woman from his house, fearing that it would force her to the streets and drag his name through the dirt. She had no gratitude, took lover after lover, hardly even attempting concealment. After one escapade, a love or passion born of a comparison of Claude with her lovers, or of jealousy for his innocent friendship for Rebecca, daughter of an old friend of his, awoke in her heart, and she resolved to rekindle the love that had once burned fiercely for her. Now, Claude, when life seemed hopeless of love, had turned his energies to the invention of a weapon that should make France successful in the war of revenge. Aided by his adopted son, Antonin, he had done wonders, and devised a cannon against which no foe could stand.

The fame of Claude's invention spread wide and far, and an unscrupulous agent for a foreign Government was sent to learn his secret by fair or foul means. This man, Cantagnac by name, got into Claude's house by pretending to wish to buy it, since it had to be sold, as its owner was short of money. Cantagnac determined to use Césarine as his tool, and felt sure of her, because he knew not only all the shameful facts with which her husband was acquainted, but one foul episode still unknown to him. He boldly proposed a bargain to the woman, met her indignant protests with mockery, threatened to tell her husband of her last adventure, and then she gave way—or, rather, pretended to give way, for, in truth, she determined to make a last appeal to her husband for his love and then tell him of the plot.

When Césarine made her appeal to the man she had treated so ill, she met with nothing but just scorn, and finally with an avowal that he loved Rebecca, loved her hopelessly, purely, utterly. At this the woman's passion turned to hatred. She went to Cantagnac and agreed to his terms. Her plan was to use Antonin, who deeply loved her, to get from him the key of the strong box where the working drawings of the gun were kept. She drew him on to a declaration of love, feigned a return of his passion, and even induced him to consent to an elopement. In the strong box he had placed some moneys of hers for safety, and when he opened it, to get funds for their flight, she lured him away, and then clutched the plans.

Outside the window Cantagnac was waiting; outside also was Claude. He had been warned of the plot by Césarine's maid, who shrank from aiding her mistress in such a crime. Antonin saw the papers in her

hand, and strove to get them from her: she struggled with him, and got free, ran to the window, broke a pane of glass, and was going to throw them out to Cantagnac, when the husband called out her name. She turned, and he fired a gun that he had snatched out of the rack, and she fell dead without a cry. Antonin he forgave, knowing that he, hardly more than a boy, had been tempted beyond human endurance, yet was loyal so far as the invention was concerned.

"La Femme de Claude" was written just after M. Dumas fils had written his famous "Tue-la" pamphlet, in which he put forward the proposition that the only thing to do with a thoroughly vicious woman is to kill her. As often happens when people write books and plays to prove theories, he has not succeeded in proving anything, for Césarine is killed, not on account of the misery and evil that her sexual viciousness has caused, but because she attempts a purely nonsexual crime. Augier's "Le Mariage d'Olympe," in which some straining persons have found an anticipation of "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," is really a more logical development of M. Dumas' thesis.

However, whether it is logically related to the pamphlet or not, whether it is right to call it a "problem play," or wrong to use the author's term "symbolic," it is a powerful, deeply interesting work, faulty in technique because of the gross disproportion of the acts and ineffectiveness of the last act, yet wise in many aspects, witty at times, and thoroughly human.

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The
Sketch.

July 25.
1894.

Porcupine

July 21.
1894.

By
Special
Desire.

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THE period of the play is fixed at the commencement of the present century, and M. VICTORIEN SARDOU has chosen Rome as the scene of its enactment. *La Tosca* is a beautiful *prima donna* in that city at the time of the battle of Marengo, the reading of a despatch from the battlefield being a minor incident of the story in relation to *La Tosca's* engagement to sing before Queen Maria Carolina and her Court. *La Tosca* loves and is loved in return by one *Cavaradossi*, a young painter, who is aiding the flight and concealment of a friend condemned to death by the odious government of Rome for a political offence to which is attached no shame or disgrace. *Cesare*, the fugitive, is hidden at the bottom of a well in the grounds which surround the dwelling of *Cavaradossi*, who is so strange and constrained in his manner that *La Tosca's* suspicions are aroused, and becoming jealous she easily convinces herself that her lover has another woman concealed on the premises, and actually discovers the hiding-place. At this point *Scarpia*, the regent of police, appears upon the scene, and, acting upon *La Tosca's* jealousy, finds out the whereabouts of the

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man he is seeking, though not the actual place of concealment, as explanations take place between *Cavaradossi* and the *prima donna* in time to prevent it. *La Tosca*, hearing that her lover's protégé is a man, and not a woman, is of course horror-stricken at the danger she has brought upon them all. Then the danger becomes imminent. *Scarpia* is not a man to be played with, and he orders *Cavaradossi* to be taken into a side room and "interrogated" by means of the torture. *Scarpia* and *La Tosca* remain on the stage, and he endeavours to drag a confession from her lips by means of her lover's agony. During this the torture continues in the ante-room, and *Cavaradossi* is heard moaning and groaning, and imploring *La Tosca* to remain firm; she first begs hard for mercy from *Scarpia*, and then curses his hardheartedness. The groans become louder and more agonised as *Scarpia* orders the torture to be increased, and the scene becomes almost too painful for words. At each refusal on the part of *prima donna* to reveal the hiding-place, *Scarpia* goes to the door of the torture-chamber, and exclaims "Insistez," and fresh cries are wrung from the suffering *Cavaradossi*. At last, however, she can stand it no longer, and, amid a scene of breathless interest, she tells *Scarpia* that his victim lies concealed at the bottom of the well. But the confession comes too late; *Cesare* having resolved not to be taken alive, has shot himself, and nothing but a dead body is discovered by *Scarpia's* agents. At this moment *Cavaradossi* is led on the stage in a fearfully exhausted condition. Blood is seen on his temples, and round his forehead is a livid blue line showing where the iron band has crushed him. The curtain falls upon this dreadful scene, when *Scarpia* exclaims, "To the dunghill with the dead man, to the gallows with the living one."

There is no falling off in the horrors of the piece in the subsequent portions thereof. The order has gone forth for the execution of *Cavaradossi*, and *Scarpia* remains deaf to all *La Tosca's* entreaties for mercy. As a last chance the *prima donna* pays a visit to the tyrant in his supper room, and entreats for the life of her lover. *Scarpia* at first is entirely obdurate, but finally offers the life of *Cavaradossi* if *La Tosca* will sacrifice her virtue in exchange. Not knowing what to do, for time presses and the moment of execution is at hand, she appears to consent, but secretly hides a knife from the supper table in the folds of her dress, with which she stabs *Scarpia* to the heart at the moment he claims the fulfilment of her promise. *La Tosca* is a Roman Catholic, and, finding she has killed her enemy, she takes two lighted candles from the sideboard, places them beside the body, then unhooks a crucifix from the wall and, laying it reverently on the dead body, silently steals out of the room. But the execution takes place in the meantime, and when *La Tosca*, seeking her lover, finds his corpse perfectly riddled with bullets, she loses all command over herself and with curses on her lips flings herself into the Tiber, with which melancholy finale the life of the *prima donna* and a most painful play come to a close.

Those of my readers who care to go to see the piece for themselves—at any rate that portion of them to whom the French language is a sealed book—may be glad of the enlightenment which this small sketch of the action will throw upon what they see and hear. Like most French pieces, it is somewhat involved in construction, and the plot is not easy to follow without understanding the dialogue.

* * * *

MADAME SARAH BERNHARDT and her company *The Tour* will leave London on Saturday night, whence they will travel to Glasgow, in which city *Tragedienne* they will open on Monday afternoon. Immediately after this performance they will proceed to Edinburgh, give one performance there, and then hasten to Bradford, Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester. The whole tour will be accomplished in the space of one week, which is very hard work indeed for the artistes, many of whom are not used to travelling at all, and still harder work, perhaps, for Mr. HENRY E. ARBERRY and Mr. MAURICE GRAY, under whose direction these flying visits are being paid. The stupendous difficulties in the way will be understood when it is stated that all the scenery and accessories from the Renaissance

Theatre, Paris, will be carried by the company. A great treat is therefore in store for the provincial towns which Madame BERNHARDT intends to favour.

Porcupine
July 21,
1894.

THE coming visit of Madame SARAH BERNHARDT to the Shakespeare Theatre is being looked forward to with intense eagerness by Liverpool playgoers. Already, I am told, the sale of stall seats far exceeds the sitting capacity of that part of the theatre, and that in all probability nearly the whole of the pit will be converted into stalls for the occasion. Thus, if the patrons of the pit are ejected from their usual coign of vantage they will perforce be obliged to ascend to the gallery, which promises that the "house" on Friday afternoon will be a very respectable one. It is rather hard on the "gods" to be invaded in their high Olympus, but *La Tosca* is not exactly the sort of nectar which these lofty powers are wont to indulge in, particularly as Madame BERNHARDT and her company will represent it in what our sea-faring friends would denominate as a "foreign lingo." The stalls and the circle will of course, understand it, or pretend to, and even the pit, exalted for the occasion, may have a commercial smattering of French which will stand them in good stead. But if there are any, no matter wheresoever they sit in the house, who are ignorant of the language, let them turn to "The Playhour" in this week's issue, where they will find the plot of the piece carefully printed for them in plain English.

Mr. Henry Arthur Jones ought to be greatly edified by Mr. William Archer's analysis of "The Masqueraders." Most of us have found that play to be an effective piece of romantic melodrama, but Mr. Archer finds in it unsuspected depths of philosophy. It suggests to him the "incalculable vastnesses of space and time," the "material immensity that is an illusion, and the infinitesimal that is truly immense." "We may, if we list," adds the philosophic William, "seek relief from the morally Incomprehensible in the materially Uncomprehended." We may, indeed; but why we should seek it at the St. James's Theatre I am quite unable to say, unless we inquire at the box-office, where, I suspect, the "materially Uncomprehended" has resolved itself into a highly satisfactory sum in arithmetic.

"Miss Rutland," Mr. Richard Pryce's play at the Gaiety, has the merit of letting one gauge the ability of pretty Miss Ettie Williams, and the opinion one forms is that some day she will be an actress of importance. She has beauty, a charming voice, discretion, and intelligence. The other side of the hedge is that her acting is like old-fashioned quartz gold mining—the rock might be rich, but you got little gold out of it. She commits few positive faults—does not over-act, does not over-force herself; but there is lack of variety, want of expression, and too great timidity in the employment of her powers. She did not warm to her work. Perhaps it was not surprising, for her part, like the play, was a long one, with little in it. "Miss Rutland" is a respectable, but inadequate, treatment of a rather good subject. Its qualities resembled those of Miss Williams's acting; they were chiefly negative.

Sketch
May 16,
1894.

Sketch
April 11,
1894.

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It is curious what different standpoints for viewing human life are taken by De Banville and Ibsen. In "The Ballad-monger" one has the idea that the poet—the preacher, I should like to call him—wonders: the grim Norwegian play teaches that silence is golden when speech would be health-giving truth. I am bound to say, in force of deduction Ibsen's work shows itself the stronger. I never in seeing or reading quite believed in "Gingoire"; it has seemed to me that what the poet says is inadequate for the effect it is supposed to produce. This is not the common case of fiction in stage matters, for, as a rule, the mountain and mouse are in considering the relation of cause and effect in theatrical life. On the other hand, "An Enemy of the People" is vigorously done, and one cannot resist belief in the strange march of events that, with only, makes the public benefactor appear the general malefactor. It is immensely impressive, not merely because of the truth and life of the characters, but also the brilliancy of the construction. The meeting is one of the most remarkable and ingenious pieces of stage-craft that I can recollect, and in it is accomplished what might puzzle a Scribe. It is a marvel, too, because when simply reading the play it does not appear effective from an artistic point of view, and even the experienced have fought shy of it, and thought it to be undramatic.

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Jissel Women's University Library

Porcupine.

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In presenting for the last night of his season a programme composed of "Gringoire" and "An Enemy of the People," Mr. Beerbohm Tree has contrived a cleverly-contrasted entertainment. What two plays could be more curiously unlike than the romantic comedy of the French poet and the intensely non-romantic social tragedy by the Norwegian dramatist? For, really, "An Enemy of the People" is a tragedy, though no blood is spilt, though the only material evidence of a big moral strife is a rent in a pair of trousers and a few broken panes of glass. Yet the destruction of a man's belief in his fellow-man, the perversion of a philanthrope into a misanthrope, is really the murder of a human character, and Dr. Stockmann is killed almost as conclusively by the cowardice and selfishness of his fellow-citizens as was the hero of the rarely-acted "Timon of Athens."

It is curious what different standpoints for viewing human life are shown by De Banville and Ibsen. In "The Ballad-monger" one has the optimistic idea that the poet—the preacher, I should like to call him—can work wonders: the grim Norwegian play teaches that silence is golden even when speech would be health-giving truth. I am bound to say that in force of deduction Ibsen's work shows itself the stronger. I have never in seeing or reading quite believed in "Gringoire"; it has always seemed to me that what the poet says is inadequate for the effect that it is supposed to produce. This is not the common case of disproportion in stage matters, for, as a rule, the mountain and mouse is in point in considering the relation of cause and effect in theatrical effects. On the other hand, "An Enemy of the People" is vigorously true, and one cannot resist belief in the strange march of events that, with bitter irony, makes the public benefactor appear the general malefactor. It is immensely impressive, not merely because of the truth and life-likeness of the characters, but also the brilliancy of the construction. The public meeting is one of the most remarkable and ingenious pieces of pure stage-craft that I can recollect, and in it is accomplished a problem that might puzzle a Scribe. It is a marvel, too, because when one is simply reading the play it does not appear effective from an acting point of view, and even the experienced have fought shy of it, supposing it to be undramatic.

I am not sure that it was wholly wise to put the two plays side by side, for they were bound to have a somewhat prejudicial effect on one another. Perhaps the object of it was to give Mr. Tree an opportunity of showing his versatility, since one cannot easily imagine a greater superficial difference than between Stockmann and Gringoire. "Superficial," I say, because at heart the two are of the same human class. Certainly, he clearly differentiated the parts. It seemed to me that in both he had one fault—the desire to be too picturesque. The jests at Gringoire's appearance lost their point, while Stockmann's clothes and hat seemed utterly out of place. I think it is for this reason that his Ballad-monger is the finer piece of acting. Certainly, the poor poet is a more romantic figure than the hustling local doctor, and can stand some sacrifice of truth to elegance. However, in both Mr. Tree's work was very able, and met with hearty applause. Mrs. Tree was charming in "The Ballad-monger," but why does she commit such a solecism as to sing a very modern pretty song in the mediaeval days? Others deserve admiration, such as Mrs. Wright and Miss Lily Hambury and Messrs. James Welch, E. M. Robson, and Revelle.

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The mention of Mabel Love reminds me of a conversation I once had with this dainty dancer on the subject of stage-fright. After saying that she had only suffered from it twice, she told me the circumstances connected with the occasion. I repeat an incident here, as nearly as I can recollect, in her own words: "I had been taking the place of Annie Hughes in 'Mamma' at Cambridge with Mr. Arthur Boucher's company, and on arriving home one Friday evening found a telegram from Sir Augustus Harris asking me to come up to Covent Garden at once. When I reached the theatre, I found he wanted me to dance on the following evening in Mr. De Lara's 'Light of Asia.' They had intended to employ an Italian *première*, and had instructed her to prepare a solo, but when she went through it at the first band rehearsal it was found quite unsuited to the Nautch style of dance required. At the last minute, therefore, it had been discarded, and I had been sent for. Seeing that I never heard the music, and had never danced an Eastern dance, I thought my only course was to refuse emphatically, which I accordingly did. But Sir Augustus had no idea of taking 'No' for an answer. He introduced me to Mr. De Lara, who fairly persuaded me until all sense of refusal had gone, and contrary to the advice of my mother and against my own convictions, I ultimately consented to do my best.

Sketch.
July 25.
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"Of course, there could not be much rehearsal, as there was rather less than a day before the production, and so a call was made for me to rehearsal next morning with the piano on the stage, half an hour before the band rehearsal, which was to be the first and only one I was to have. Truly, the Fates were not propitious. On arriving at the theatre, I learned that the regular pianist was ill, and they had sent an Italian who could not speak a word of English. As I did not know the music, I could not make out the beginning, middle, or end. The result was that when the band rehearsal came off my arrangement did not fit, and, perfectly disheartened, I went to Sir Augustus and said I had tried my best, and must decline to perform. He, however, urged me to continue, and arranged for the band to go through the dance again—a very unusual thing. This time it went better, and the few hours before the performance I spent looking after a costume which was being hastily made. I had a very anxious time while waiting to go on, and, not having seen a great part of it before, did not even know when my turn came. At last the dreaded moment arrived, and the dance which had cost me so much trouble and anxiety was exceedingly well received." After hearing Miss Love's account of the incident I have just related, I referred to the notices of the ill-fated "Light of Asia," and found the damnation of cold praise accorded to the opera itself, punctuated with encomiums about "a Nautch dance, charmingly executed by Miss Mabel Love."

Sketch.
April 11, '94.

"I suppose that you share the approval, apparently felt by most veterans, for the training afforded by a stock company?"

"There is nothing like it," said Mrs. Boucicault. "In my young days every actor and actress went through a definite course of training. We went, so to speak, through a period of apprenticeship, which generally included a seven years' stay in the provinces, and a thorough tuition in every branch of our art. I learnt to fence from Angelo, followed a course of opera dancing, and played every sort of part, from Columbine to Lady Macbeth. It would be difficult to make the young folk of the present day even understand the composition of an old stock company. There was the leading lady, the walking gentleman, the heavy father, the juvenile lady, and the soubrette, or singing chambermaid. I do not consider any age too young to make a start, and to any girl who wishes to become a good actress I say, 'Get into some country theatre, learn to forget yourself, and to play everything—burlesque, comedy, farce, tragedy, and the classical and modern drama.' A good stage-manager is the best of elocution masters. There is a fancy nowadays that it is a good thing to begin as understudy. I think this is a mistake, for, though it gives the young actress an opportunity, circumstances forbid her availing herself of it—the more so as she is generally only given the chance of taking part in two or three performances."

Sketch.
May 16, '94.

Sketch.
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THE JUBILEE OF "GO-BANG."

If I were a "Johnny," I should haunt the stage-door of the Trafalgar Theatre in order to pay court to Miss Letty Lind, who, to me, is the embodiment of all that is brightest and best in musical farce. One could not have anyone brighter, more energetic, more daringly irrelevant, and delightfully impudent, more dainty in dancing, more artful in singing, and more fascinating in person than the representative of "Di, Di, Di" in "Go-Bang." All this came into my head while looking at the second edition, the other night. Primarily, I went to see the new curtain-raiser, "A Silver Honeymoon," by Mr. "Richard-Henry," a domestic comedy that might disappoint those who have "got culture" in matters dramatic and claim exclusive possession, but charms the people who trust to fate and early arrival to get good seats. The play was written for them and they like it, and as I am a prejudiced person, accused of Ibsenism, realism, and other crimes, I will not express my opinion of it as an artistic work. Besides, I lost my coffee by having to rush off early to see it, and then found it might have begun twenty minutes later.

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The revised and corrected "Go-Bang" is greatly changed, so far as the second volume is concerned, and improved, too. What was good remains, what was doubtful has gone, and some capital new things have come. Among the novelties is a comic ball-punching scene, in which Mr. J. L. Shine imitates the famous Corbett in "Gentleman Jack," while Miss Letty gives her version of the affair. By-the-bye, in the utterly delightful "Chinee Dolly," could she not manage to do her hair *à la Chinoise* or *Japonaise*? There is a burlesque, capital played by Messrs. Shine and Grattan, on the great card-playing scene in "The Masqueraders." Moreover, Miss Letty gave a new imitation—Miss Yohé, in the plantation song from "Little Christopher Columbus." It was very cleverly done, and Mr. Cecil Raleigh—one of the parents of "L. C. Columbus"—who was in the house with his handsome wife and pretty Miss Rose Nesbitt, nearly fell out of his box through excessive laughter. Mr. Fred Storey, the new Guardian of the Golden Canopy, made a hit by his marvellous dancing; Mr. George Grossmith, jun., has new comic business that is successful. However, I cannot keep my pen off Miss Letty Lind, whose singing and dancing are so fascinating that they might make the fortune of even a dull play, and, if I had not a respect for space, should become dithyrambic concerning her. I may add that a third sister of Miss Lind now appears in the piece. This is Miss Lydia Flopp. In another part of the present issue of *The Sketch* mention is made of this young lady, who at the time the article was written still retained her real name, Miss Lydia Rudge. The writer stated that she was likely to be seen in London at no distant date, but she has quite anticipated even his hopefulness for her future.

MONOCLE.

Sketch.
May 2. 94.

Writing of Sunday excitements reminds me of the very remarkable lecture which Mr. Bernard Shaw delivered in St. James's Hall on that day to the Playgoers' Club. The audience was one of the most interesting that it could be possible to gather together; a large number of actors and actresses, artists, literary and dramatic critics, were among Mr. Shaw's hearers. Mr. Shaw's lecture was on the corruption of the Press with reference to dramatic and musical criticism, and he told a story to the effect that his very frank criticism of the Covent Garden Opera in the *World* had led to the stoppage of the usual free tickets by the lessee of the theatre. "I do not blame Sir Augustus Harris," said Mr. Shaw; "he considered that in giving me free tickets there was a certain sort of understanding that I, in return, should give him a favourable notice of his productions." The remedy for this, in Mr. Shaw's eyes, is that proprietors and editors of newspapers should pay for seats for their critics. This is a proposition to which I do not think that any proprietor or editor of a leading newspaper would in the slightest degree object; it would be very much better if the stalls for the first nights of theatres and operas were paid for by journalists instead of given to them. This



MR. SHAW AT THE PLAYGOERS' CLUB.

Drawn by J. Bernard Partridge.

step, however, is never likely to be taken, because there is, apart from the Press, a general understanding that a manager gives away a certain number of the stalls and dress circle to his friends on the first night. Even should the dramatic critics have to pay for their seats, the manager would be sure to number among his friends certain proprietors, or editors, or people of considerable influence upon this and the other journal, and the same result would ensue.

Mr. Shaw's second reform is even less practicable; he suggested that the theatre system which obtains in Germany might be repeated here, and in relating his experience of the Frankfort Opera House he told how he had paid some two or three marks for an admirable seat, and had beheld daughters of the leading citizens of Frankfort wandering to and fro in the foyer between the acts. He implied that it was very evident that this kind of thing went on night after night, the theatre being treated as an absolute adjunct to the home. Mr. Shaw here surely forgets the great difference which separates an ordinary moderate-sized town in Germany from a vast metropolis like London, with its five millions of inhabitants. We have no analogy to Frankfort in our own provincial towns, because the cheap railway takes so many of the populace to London on the most trivial excuse. Mr. Shaw implied that a man, could he take his wife comfortably to the theatre at a total cost of five shillings instead of thirty, would be more likely to go; but that is only partially the case. There are rarely more than half-a-dozen successful plays running in London at a time, and the demand for seats on the part of a vast mass of people necessarily sends up the price of these. When

Mr. Irving attempted numbered seats in his pit—and surely numbered seats in the Lyceum pit would be nearly as good as the stalls—he found the thing an entire failure, owing to the disappointment of people coming from a distance—in fact, the plan was absolutely unworkable. It would have succeeded anywhere else but in London; but London is unlike any other place in the world. Mr. Shaw said a great deal about the superior comfort of the stalls, and so on, but, so far as that goes, the ordinary half-crown pit seats in the Garrick Theatre—to name a comparatively new building—are quite as comfortable for any but the most fastidious people as the stalls in any ordinary theatre. Yet the existence of these charming pit seats is not likely to send anybody to the Garrick when a play has gained the character of being only a qualified success. Of course, there is one thing to be conceded in reference to Mr. Shaw's position, and that is that there is not the all-round enthusiasm for drama in this country which is the rule in Germany. It must be remembered that the favourite literature, even of children, in Germany takes a dramatic form, and no household is without its volumes of Schiller.

Mr. Shaw's third proposition with reference to the corruption of the critics treated of advertisements. He has, no doubt, heard of the important part played by advertisements in newspapers; he knows that without the advertisements of certain commercial firms, who appreciate its great circulation and wide popularity, a paper like *The Sketch* could not be produced for sixpence. He assumes, therefore, that theatre advertisements have a great part in this, and after remarking on the stupidity of managers, who fail to appreciate the relative importance of newspapers, he goes on to inform his hearers that the *Daily Chronicle* has something like half the theatre advertisements of the *Daily Telegraph*. He argued that the editor of the *Daily Chronicle* would be well advised to publish all the playbills of theatres, including the cast of each play, in his columns, free of all charge, these advertisements being matter of public interest. When it is known, he argued, that the *Daily Chronicle* contains all these day by day, large numbers of people who are interested in theatres will go to it regularly for reference. It would probably prove, if the subject were gone into, that, so far as regards theatre advertisements, any paper that has not got them is very well content to do without them. So far as *The Sketch* is concerned, I am in a position to say frankly that it cares nothing at all about the theatre advertisements. They are of very little value, and they do not affect in the slightest the attitude of the paper towards this or that play. We should be quite ready to publish free advertisements of all theatres if it were not that we think that we can give more interesting matter in our columns, and a small charge for the insertion of these advertisements acts as a very useful method of keeping them from absorbing space which can be better employed. Certainly, the notion that the editor of any paper is in the slightest degree influenced by these advertisements in his attitude towards any given play or concert shows that, while Mr. Shaw is one of the most brilliant journalists of the day, he has absolutely no business grasp of the way newspapers are conducted.

is said, however, one is compelled to admit that those who Shaw on Sunday listened to a most delightful lecture. That an should be able to produce so fascinating a play and so a lecture on two succeeding days indicates a brilliant future Bernard Shaw.

standing the fact that there have been signs of a plethora of at the Haymarket lately, the first night of "A Bunch of rought together a smart house. Even Royalty, if one uses the elastic way that would grieve the purist, was present in the e Duchess of Teck, who, accompanied by the Duke, occupied ness Burdett-Coutts and her many-named husband, the on what, I think, actors call the O.P. side. The Duchess dressed in black, relieved by a few white flowers, and the ore a dark gown, trimmed with lace, and a cap with pink The marked contrast between the two ladies was that the ore no diamonds and her companion many. In the box above re two of Mr. Tree's sisters, and dotted about the house in all vere members of the two large theatrical families, the Terrys rys: the most conspicuous was the point of junction, Miss Julia ry, who, of course, looked handsome in a white dress, and y curious about the performance of Miss Audrey Ford, the ie. By-the-bye, programmes would be needless if the very nch way of labelling *ingénues* could be carried out with all ers of a play. Has any *ingénue* ever appeared on the French ared or dared to discard the traditional blue and white frock, Ford wears in the first act? Evidently her last night's *début* market was not only in acting, but also in "making up," fr. Beerbohm Tree drew her to his heart, and said that her d ever be engraven there, a comical effect came from the distinct impress of her face was seen where it had rested

house I noticed Lord William Neville, Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Mrs. Jopling Rowe, Fanny Brough, in a *pur Louis XV.* le peach-coloured satin brocade with white; Lottie Venne, pretty gown of grey satin, with sleeves and draperies of rose-t; Lady Morell Mackenzie, in black and diamonds; die" Mathews, Mr. Bancroft, Sir George and Lady Lewis. dresses were noticeable for freshness or beauty; no doubt, the arance" of many pretty gowns was kept for the *première* at Theatre on Saturday evening.

ness of Miss Rose Norreys has a special sadness to those play- o remember her in the days of "The Magistrate" and o mistress." I have a particularly vivid recollection of her the latter play, a performance full of delightfully piquant There was one line which tickles me still every time I think of Peggy is dressed for the evening party, she remarks with ty, "There is only one thing wanted to make me a duchess." t is that?" asks somebody. "A duke," is the convincing an see Peggy now with her nose in the air and her red locks distracting *abandon*. Never was red hair so fascinating; a young actress so excellent a chance of establishing herself favourite. Alas! Miss Norreys took quite a different view of on. She despised her success in Mr. Pinero's farces, and shine in the poetic drama. With the most earnest intentions, the indefinable quality which makes the higher dramatic years have been passed in unavailing struggle, and Peggy, ible Peggy, has faded into a dream.

Sketch.
May 2.
94.

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Although Nini Patte-en-l'Air has attracted considerable attention in London, I do not think many people know how highly she is thought of in France. She is the Katti Lanner of Paris, and has a large school, in which she teaches the divers eccentric dances of which she is so thorough a mistress. She was the first to obtain remuneration for public dancing, as previous to her appearance the dancers at such places as the Moulin Rouge and Casino de Paris were not paid to perform. Of course, in this happy land of licensing committees, Madame Nini is not permitted to show Londoners what she can do, but even at home she is strictly proper. La Goulue and Rayon d'Or, who are so popular with Parisians, are avowedly unrestrained, and their costume is enough to give a nervous man palpitation of the heart; but Nini Patte-en-l'Air, on the other hand, has conscientiously striven to do for the *chahut* and "splits" what Kate Vaughan did for dancing at the Gaiety. There would be no room for doubt as to her ultimate success, were not all that eccentric dancing so painfully ugly. On all sides I find it coming into fashion, on stage of theatre and music-hall alike. Is it the first symptom of decline from the high form of skirt dancing, a little time ago so popular? Just as Sylvia Grey and Letty Lind, following the lead of Kate Vaughan, had made skirt dancing delightful, the hideous serpentine came along, bringing in its airy train the "splits" and "Catherine-wheels" now in vogue. Why will not some philanthropic person start an association for the protection of the playgoer against eccentric dancing? When I saw an audience go into hysterics over Les Sœurs Devèrvier, the latest exponents of the "splits," scarcely a week ago, I nearly shed tears, and quite shed oaths.

Talking of dancing, which is a weakness of mine, Signorina Cavallazzi, whose magnificent pantomimic powers have delighted Londoners for so long, tells me that she intends shortly to open a school of her own. It will not compete in any way with the National School, having rather for its objects the teaching of deportment, pantomime, and fancy dancing, together with the production of private theatricals. Signorina Cavallazzi does not propose to give up her own stage work, but since the lamented death of her husband, the late Mr. Mapleson, she has found the time hanging heavily on her hands, and seeks congenial occupation for the many hours when she is not at the theatre. When I recall her impersonation of Orfeo in the ballet of that name, and recollect how replete with charm and grace it was, I feel convinced that her pupils will benefit immensely from her tuition, if she can convey to others intelligence similar to her own. Signorina Cavallazzi, in addition to her physical gifts, possesses the rare power of merging her identity in the character she portrays, and her movements are spontaneous and natural. At the entertainment recently given at the West Theatre, Royal Albert Hall, she arranged the dances in the masque by John Gray and in "Black Sheep," a pantomime pastoral by André Raffalovich and Cotsford Dick, and not a little of the success of the performances was due to her efforts. I have no doubt that her new venture will rank among her many triumphs, for, while it is given to no mortal to command success, to very few is it given to deserve it as much as she does.

Sketch.
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94.

o Sketch
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"THE MASQUERADERS," AT THE ST. JAMES'S THEATRE.

It certainly was a famous evening, famous enough to draw Royalty in the person of the Duke and Duchess of York and the Duke and Duchess of Teck, to say nothing of aristocracy and notable folk, Baroness Burdett-Coutts, the Earl of Lonsborough, Earl Cairns, the Earl of Kilmorey, the Marchioness of Granby, the Right Hons. A. J. Balfour and G. J. Goschen, Lord Randolph Churchill, Sir Francis and Lady Jeune, Sir Douglas Straight, Mr. Lockwood, Q.C., M.P., Sir George and Lady Lewis, Mr. C. F. Gill, Mr. "Charlie" Mathews, and others of importance, too many for me to name; indeed, your society chronicler would have had an evening's entertainment without ever looking at the play. Of course, I did occasionally look across the footlights, and as I have not space in this number for serious notice must reserve it till next week.

The revised and corrected "Go-Bang" is greatly changed, so far as the second volume is concerned, and improved, too. What was good remains, what was doubtful has gone, and some capital new things have come. Among the novelties is a comic ball-punching scene, in which Mr. J. L. Shine imitates the famous Corbett in "Gentleman Jack," while Miss Letty gives her version of the affair. By-the-by, in the utterly delightful "Chinee Dolly," could she not manage to do her hair *à la Chinoise* or *Japonaise*? There is a burlesque, capitably played by Messrs. Shine and Grattan, on the great card-playing scene in "The Masqueraders." Moreover, Miss Letty gave a new imitation—Miss Yohé, in the plantation song from "Little Christopher Columbus." It was very cleverly done, and Mr. Cecil Raleigh—one of the parents of "L. C. Columbus"—who was in the house with his handsome wife and pretty Miss Rose Nesbitt, nearly fell out of his box through excessive laughter. Mr. Fred Storey, the new Guardian of the Golden Canopy, made a hit by his marvellous dancing; Mr. George Grossmith, jun., has new comic business that is successful. However, I cannot keep my pen off Miss Letty Lind, whose singing and dancing are so fascinating that they might make the fortune of even a dull play, and, if I had not a respect for space, should become dithyrambic concerning her. I may add that a third sister of Miss Lind now appears in the piece. This is Miss Lydia Flopp. In another part of the present issue of *The Sketch* mention is made of this young lady, who at the time the article was written still retained her real name, Miss Lydia Rudge. The writer stated that she was likely to be seen in London at no distant date, but she has quite anticipated even his hopefulness for her future.

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It certainly was a famous evening, famous enough to draw Royalty in the person of the Duke and Duchess of York and the Duke and Duchess of Teck, to say nothing of aristocracy and notable folk, Baroness Burdett-Coutts, the Earl of Lonsborough, Earl Cairns, the Earl of Kilmorey, the Marchioness of Granby, the Right Hon. A. J. Balfour and G. J. Goschen, Lord Randolph Churchill, Sir Francis and Lady Jeune, Sir Douglas Straight, Mr. Lockwood, Q.C., M.P., Sir George and Lady Lewis, Mr. C. F. Gill, Mr. "Charlie" Mathews, and others of importance, too many for me to name; indeed, your society chronicler would have had an evening's entertainment without ever looking at the play. Of course, I did occasionally look across the footlights, and as I have not space in this number for serious notice must reserve it till next week.

The revised and corrected "Go-Bang" is greatly changed, so far as the second volume is concerned, and improved, too. What was good remains, what was doubtful has gone, and some capital new things have come. Among the novelties is a comic ball-punching scene, in which Mr. J. L. Shine imitates the famous Corbett in "Gentleman Jack," while Miss Letty gives her version of the affair. By-the-bye, in the utterly delightful "Chinee Dolly," could she not manage to do her hair *à la Chinoise* or *Japonaise*? There is a burlesque, capitally played by Messrs. Shine and Grattan, on the great card-playing scene in "The Masqueraders." Moreover, Miss Letty gave a new imitation—Miss Yohé, in the plantation song from "Little Christopher Columbus." It was very cleverly done, and Mr. Cecil Raleigh—one of the parents of "L. C. Columbus"—who was in the house with his handsome wife and pretty Miss Rose Nesbitt, nearly fell out of his box through excessive laughter. Mr. Fred Storey, the new Guardian of the Golden Canopy, made a hit by his marvellous dancing; Mr. George Grossmith, jun., has new comic business that is successful. However, I cannot keep my pen off Miss Letty Lind, whose singing and dancing are so fascinating that they might make the fortune of even a dull play, and, if I had not a respect for space, should become dithyrambic concerning her. I may add that a third sister of Miss Lind now appears in the piece. This is Miss Lydia Flopp. In another part of the present issue of *The Sketch* mention is made of this young lady, who at the time the article was written still retained her real name, Miss Lydia Rudge. The writer stated that she was likely to be seen in London at no distant date, but she has quite anticipated even his hopefulness for her future.

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MONOCLE.

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Writing of Sunday excitements reminds me of the very remarkable lecture which Mr. Bernard Shaw delivered in St. James's Hall on that day to the Playgoers' Club. The audience was one of the most interesting that it could be possible to gather together; a large number of actors and actresses, artists, literary and dramatic critics, were among Mr. Shaw's hearers. Mr. Shaw's lecture was on the corruption of the Press with reference to dramatic and musical criticism, and he told a story to the effect that his very frank criticism of the Covent Garden Opera in the *World* had led to the stoppage of the usual free tickets by the lessee of the theatre. "I do not blame Sir Augustus Harris," said Mr. Shaw; "he considered that in giving me free tickets there was a certain sort of understanding that I, in return, should give him a favourable notice of his productions." The remedy for this, in Mr. Shaw's eyes, is that proprietors and editors of newspapers should pay for seats for their critics. This is a proposition to which I do not think that any proprietor or editor of a leading newspaper would in the slightest degree object. It would be very much better if the stalls for the first nights of theatres and operas were paid for by journalists instead of given to them. This

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Drawn by J. Bernard Partridge.

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A famous evening, for we were to see Mr. Henry Arthur Jones set, will he nill he, against Mr. Pinero, and Mrs. Patrick Campbell forced into comparison with her wonderful performance as Paula Wray. It is not hard to deal with the lady: she had no chance of another triumph. Dulcie Laronie is a decidedly passive person. In the first act—an excellent act of exposition and full of interest—she was a lively flesh-and-blood creature; but afterwards she grew listless, almost indifferent, till she fired up in the third act and expressed some strong views forcibly on marriage. In the last act she seemed a changed person. A clever, uneven performance it was, sometimes brilliant, not wholly unsuccessful, but suggesting that she is not a one-part actress. But why the blonde wig and make-up? No doubt, as barnmaid they were needful; but they clash with her style of beauty, and rob it of character.

The play? First, a brilliant, somewhat improbable act; then a clever, rather dull act; next an act with a tremendous, though hardly novel, *coup de théâtre* that brought down the house; and, finally, a somewhat pretty, thin, poetical, and unsatisfactory conclusion. A very, very clever play it is, witty and cynical at times, quaintly unsophisticated at others; never wearisome, but occasionally distracting. The third act did the mischief: the blood-and-thunder of the card scene led one to expect something violent in the fourth; the house was prepared for the worst—for murder, suicide, or accidental death—and was disappointed by an ending that seemed to say "To be continued in our next."

Mr. George Alexander was at his best as Remon, and gave a curious, interesting colour to the part, and threw immense fire into the card scene, which was also admirably played by Mr. Herbert Waring. Indeed, people who like thrilling moments cannot possibly afford to miss the third act of the play; the critics may say that it is stagey, impossible, and not even novel, but the fact remains that, though the result is a foregone conclusion, it is exceedingly exciting. The minor parts were excellently played in most cases. No one can deny praise to Mr. H. V. Esmond, Mr. Granville, Mr. W. H. Day, Mr. Ian Robertson, Mr. Vane-Tempest, and Mr. Elliot. The mounting was admirable. The drawing-room scene, in subtle tones of green, decorated with huge bunches of flowers, was quite a triumph; whilst the first set, the court-yard of the inn, if less beautiful, was even more remarkable.

MONOCLE.

P. M. B.

July 19, 1894.

It is a curious commentary on the vaunted reconciliation between the intelligent public and the theatre, that while our leading manager makes haste to purchase *Madame Sans-Gêne* for production at his own temple, as it is called, of the classic drama, not a single bid appears to have been made for the other notable Parisian novelty presented to us this season. "What!" you say, "does he regret that the managers have not been struggling for the rights of *Isidyl*?" Not at all; no more than Mr. Kipling's Tommy Atkins am I a worshipper of that

Bloomin' idol made o' mud,
Wot they calls the Great Gawd Budd,

as exhibited by M. M. Silvestre and Morand in their noisy and turgid melodrama. But *Isidyl* has not been the only novelty of Madame Bernhardt's season, nor even the most remarkable, though certainly, and in every sense, it made the most noise. Jules Lemaître's *Les Rois* was produced with no anticipatory flourish of trumpets, and was curtly dismissed by the critics, who found it merely dull. One of them even "went one better," and, with inimitable gravity, pronounced it "vulgar." If a prize had been offered for the most inapplicable epithet in the English language, this gentleman would certainly have carried it off. It is precisely its delicacy of style and treatment which prevents the play from coming home to the nerves of the populace; but if we critics were in earnest in our demand for plays that appeal to the intelligence, we should all have been clamouring for an English version of *Les Rois*.

The scene is laid in one of those imaginary kingdoms which have always been the favourite haunts of romance. Mr. Stevenson's Prince Otto ruled over the Principality of Grinewald; Mr. "Anthony Hope's" King Rudolf (in *The Prisoner of Zenda*) occupied, or should have occupied, the throne of Ruritania; M. Lemaître's Prince Hermann is King (on his father's abdication) of Alfania. His wife, the Princess Wilhelmine, is a fanatic for the

monarchical idea, in which he himself has ceased to believe. Since the accident of birth has forced such uncongenial duties upon him, at least he will rule in a spirit of beneficent brotherhood, and will lose no opportunity of showing his sympathy with, and his belief in, the downtrodden masses. At the entreaty of his democratic Egeria, the Countess Frida von Talberg, he has released from prison a notorious agitress, Avdotia Litianeff. Avdotia's first use of her liberty is to fly the flag of revolution in the streets, and she is again arrested. The mob clamours for her release, and the humanitarian king will not take such simple repressive measures as will prevent the demonstration from becoming a riot. He will show his confidence in the People; and the People, misunderstanding him as he misunderstands them, proceed from riot almost to revolt. At last, when they threaten to storm his own palace, Hermann gives the order to fire upon them. The next moment he frantically endeavours to recall the word of command; but it is too late. The rattle of musketry is heard, and is followed by yells of rage and shrieks of agony. Then the noise of the tumult dies away, a great stillness falls upon the scene, and Hermann knows that his ideal kingship has ended, ere it had well begun, in the massacre of women and children by his command, on the very steps, as it were, of his throne. If this be not a tragic situation, I can conceive no meaning in the words; and the tragedy is heightened by the presence of his wife, who shrinks no less than he from bloodshed, and laments even more bitterly than he the untimely idealism which has brought things to this pass, since she believes it to be due to the influence of another woman.

The rest of the play is not as striking as this great scene, but it is throughout a graceful, moving, and genuinely dramatic romance. Hermann himself is a character that might tempt any actor (M. Guitry made him unnecessarily lumpish and lugubrious); Wilhelmine is a noble and beautiful figure, embodied by Madame Bernhardt in such a way as to bring out all its poetry; and the old King Christian, who appears in the first act and the last, is an admirable acting part. To mount the play properly would demand some outlay in costumes, but not one tithe as much as will be required for the Empire dresses and uniforms of *Madame Sans-Gêne*. Yet Sardou's pseudo-historical vaudeville is at once snapped up, while no one would have at a gift Lemaître's beautiful and thoughtfully romance. Of course this is not in the least surprising. Sardou is unquestionably a safer investment than Lemaître. But the fact that *Les Rois* should be loftily pooh-poohed by the majority of the critics, and entirely overlooked by the managers, is, I repeat, a significant commentary upon the boasted "intellectuality" of our theatrical life.

Westminster
Gazette.

Feb. 15, 1895

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

Many of the audience were full of hope (last night) that Mr. Oscar Wilde in his avowedly comic play would have gladdened the public by a work novel and original in style of humour. That hope was not fulfilled, though we must hasten to say that the house was far from disappointed by the piece. On the contrary, the people in the humbler parts of the theatre were delighted, and those in the rest were pleased. For last night showed that Mr. Oscar Wilde has succeeded in catching the taste of the pit and gallery—what the subtle link of sympathy between him and the lower middle class actually is one can hardly guess.

"The Importance of Being Earnest" may be described as an old-fashioned farce told in the well-known "Wilde" kind of dialogue. So far as intrigue, construction, and invention of comic business are concerned, nothing could be less likely to melt the ice on the Thames. So strongly is this felt that instinctively one looks at the programme to see if there be any acknowledgment of debt upon it. The omission of the words "new and original" is by custom of the theatres tantamount at least to the admission that the work is an adaptation. However, all the qualities of the dialogue are peculiar to the author. Probably no one else would think it funny to say that "divorces are made

in heaven," or try to make a jest out of a popular phrase by talking of washing *clean* linen in public, or have the audacity to use such an old French joke as "in married life three is company, two is none." Nor have other dramatists filled their plays by going through books of proverbs and making jests out of them by turning them upside down. On the other hand, one must give him credit for some smart speeches. The suggestion of Lady Brockwell, "the Liberal-Unionists rank as Tories: they dine with us, or at least they come in after dinner"; her remark that if in the drawing-room "one plays good music the people won't listen, and if one plays bad they won't talk," the suggestion, "he has never written a single book, so there's no knowing how learned he may be," the remark of the Cockney girl, "I had no idea you had flowers in the country," all deserve recognition. Unfortunately, whilst the successes were not rare, the failures were actually numerous. If a person of judgment had been through the play and removed the numerous jests that are below the standard of the penny comic papers, the piece would have gained greatly. Here are some more samples—good, bad, and indifferent:—

To be advanced in years is no guarantee of respectability.
Born in the purple of commerce, or raised from the ranks of the aristocracy.
To wish to be buried in Paris hardly points to a serious state of mind at the last.
To have lost one parent is a misfortune, to have lost both looks like carelessness.
Only such people as stockbrokers talk "business," and then only at dinner.
It is much cleverer to talk nonsense than to listen to it.
Divorces are made in heaven.
I hate people who are not serious about meals.
Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit. Touch it, and the bloom is gone.
The old-fashioned respect for the young is rapidly dying out.
Nobody ever does talk anything but nonsense.
It is always painful to part from people one has only known a brief time.
I did not know you had flowers in the country.
If it was my business, I should not talk about it.
I am only serious about my amusements.
The truth is rarely pure, and never simple.
I never saw a woman so altered, she looks quite twenty years younger.
No married man is ever attractive to his wife.
The amount of women who flirt with their husbands in London is simply scandalous. It is washing one's clean linen in public.

The Plot.

John Worthing is a wealthy man, with a house in the country, and a young, pretty ward with whom he is not in love. In order to find an excuse for his frequent visits to London—no reason why he should give any excuses is suggested—he pretends to Cecily Cardew, the ward, that he is visiting his young ne'er-do-well brother Ernest. In town, for reasons undivulged, he passes under the name of Ernest. He has a friend named Algernon Moncrieff, a fashionable young "masher," whose chief humour—like that of many characters in farce—is his gluttony. Algy discovers John's secret, and tries to get an invitation to the country house, but fails: why Worthing will not let him come is a mystery. Now John—passing as Ernest—has fallen in love with the Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax, daughter of Lady Brockwell, and at Algernon's rooms he proposes to her. The proposal is a complicated piece of "Marivaudage," which leads up to her statement that she loves him because his name is Ernest, "a vibrating name" that fascinates her: he has not the courage to confess that he is John. Lady Brockwell refuses her consent to an engagement because she learns from him that, though eligible in every other respect, he is a foundling. From a remark made by Worthing to Gwendolen, Algernon learns his address: how, seeing the intimacy between them, he could have remained till then ignorant of it, one can hardly say. The second act passes in the garden of Worthing's country place. As the most unsophisticated playgoer guessed, Algernon arrives, calling himself Ernest, and pretending to be Worthing's imaginary brother. He falls in love with Cecily at once, and proposes without delay; she, to his surprise, says she has been engaged to him for three months, through hearing what her guardian said of him. There is a heavily-handled scene in the style of Marivaux between them, ending by her saying that she loves him because his name is Ernest. For Mr. Wilde, if lavish with verbal quips, is excessively economical with his comic ideas, and duplicates most of his scenes—a poverty-stricken device practised before his day, but not pushed by anyone else to such extremes. Since in the first act Worthing has announced that he intended to put an end to his imaginary brother no one was surprised to see him arrive in deep mourning and announce that his young brother was dead, and the humour of his meeting Algernon posing as Ernest was also somewhat anticipated. Anon, when the stage was free of the men, Miss Gwendolen arrived and made friends with Cecily, till in their talk they came to the conclusion that both were engaged to the same man—Ernest Worthing. When the others return the girls discover

how they have been deceived, and leave the scene indignantly. There follows a simple antique comic piece of business, in which the men eat and quarrel over tea-cakes and crumpets, and on this the curtain descends. In the last act the difficulties are solved. Algernon appeases Cecily by explaining that he stole the name in order to gain admittance to her. Worthing's case is more difficult. However, it is shown, by one of the oldest stage devices, that he was the long-lost son of Lady Brockwell's sister, so the impediment of birth was removed. There remained the difficult question of the name, for, of course, the prodigious punning jest in the title must be taken into account. It was suggested that Worthing's father might have been named Ernest. Lady Brockwell's memory failed her, but a search through Army Lists showed that it was the case, so all troubles came to an end.

The Performance.

Whether Mr. George Alexander was prudent in giving such a trivial piece the honour of production at his theatre, only the box-office can tell; but it can hardly be pretended that its artistic value gave it a title to such an honour. However, the popular manager, having taken the piece, has done all that he could, save use the blue pencil judiciously and lavishly, to give it a chance. It is handsomely mounted and admirably acted. Mr. Alexander himself as John Worthing shows that he is as brilliant an actor in the comic as in the sentimental. Miss Rose Leclercq played excellently as Lady Brockwell. The Algernon of Mr. Allan Aynesworth was a clever piece of work; whilst Miss Evelyn Millard and Miss Irene Vanbrugh acted charmingly as Cecily and Gwendolen. Mr. Oscar Wilde did not make a speech.

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Feb. 15, 95.

OSCAR WILDE'S NEW PLAY.

In giving a title to his latest piece, "The Importance of Being Earnest," produced by Mr. George Alexander last night, at the St. James's Theatre, with the utmost success, Mr. Oscar Wilde has descended to the perpetration of a pun. The whole of the story of the three acts deals with a certain "Ernest," who by the audience is believed to be non-existent until five minutes before the end of a production that is as whimsical in idea as it is eccentric in execution. Neither in treatment nor in material does it in the least resemble the author's preceding contributions to the stage. It is farce exhibiting a tendency towards the Gilbertian method, alike in the peculiar development of an altogether impossible plot, in the humour of much of the stage business, and in the mock gravity of a great portion of the dialogue. Mr. Oscar Wilde has in a measure disarmed criticism by describing his work as "a trivial comedy for serious people." But to those inclined for merriment as well as to those whom the author may consider "serious," the result of the performance will be the same, laughter will reign throughout. Some of the scenes are so ridiculous as to scarcely bear examination—a process not at all likely to be adopted, by the way. The extravagant attitude of the characters, and the obvious leading up of the conversation in places to an easily guessed issue, will probably be looked upon as good points rather than blemishes by audiences who attend the theatre to be amused and know something of Mr. Oscar Wilde's labours. Last night, from the moment a light-hearted young fellow asking his valet why so much more champagne was drunk at select bachelor parties than was usually the case when the guests were married folk, received the reply, "I attribute it to the superiority of the wine," the success of "The Importance of Being Earnest" was not in doubt. Throughout the piece went as well as could be wished by every one concerned.

A famous evening, for we were to see Mr. Henry Arthur Jones set, will he nill he, against Mr. Pinero, and Mrs. Patrick Campbell forced into comparison with her wonderful performance as Paula Wray. It is not hard to deal with the lady: she had no chance of another triumph. Dulcie Larondie is a decidedly passive person. In the first act—an excellent act of exposition and full of interest—she was a lively flesh-and-blood creature; but afterwards she grew listless, almost indifferent, till she fired up in the third act and expressed some strong views forcibly on marriage. In the last act she seemed a changed person. A clever, uneven performance it was, sometimes brilliant, not wholly unsuccessful, but suggesting that she is not a one-part actress. But why the blonde wig and make-up? No doubt, as barmaid they were needful; but they clash with her style of beauty, and rob it of character.

The play? First, a brilliant, somewhat improbable act; then a clever, rather dull act; next an act with a tremendous, though hardly novel, *coup de théâtre* that brought down the house; and, finally, a somewhat pretty, thin, poetical, and unsatisfactory conclusion. A very, very clever play it is, witty and cynical at times, quaintly unsophisticated at others; never wearisome, but occasionally distracting. The third act did the mischief: the blood-and-thunder of the card scene led one to expect something violent in the fourth; the house was prepared for the worst—for murder, suicide, or accidental death—and was disappointed by an ending that seemed to say “To be continued in our next.”

Mr. George Alexander was at his best as Remon, and gave a curious, interesting colour to the part, and threw immense fire into the card scene, which was also admirably played by Mr. Herbert Waring. Indeed, people who like thrilling moments cannot possibly afford to miss the third act of the play; the critics may say that it is stagey, impossible, and not even novel, but the fact remains that, though the result is a foregone conclusion, it is exceedingly exciting. The minor parts were excellently played in most cases. No one can deny praise to Mr. H. V. Esmond, Mr. Granville, Mr. W. H. Day, Mr. Ian Robertson, Mr. Vane-Tempest, and Mr. Elliot. The mounting was admirable. The drawing-room scene, in subtle tones of green, decorated with huge bunches of flowers, was quite a triumph. The garden scene, the courtyard of the inn, if less beautiful, was even more remarkable.

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MONOCLE.

P. M. B.
July 19. 1894.

It is a curious commentary on the vaunted reconciliation between the intelligent public and the theatre, that while our leading manager makes haste to purchase *Madame Sans-Gêne* for production at his own temple, as it is called, of the classic drama, not a single bid appears to have been made for the other notable Parisian novelty presented to us this season. “What!” you say, “does he regret that the managers have not been struggling for the rights of *Izél*?” Not at all; no more than Mr. Kipling’s Tommy Atkins am I a worshipper of that

Bloomin’ idol made o’ mud,
Wot they calls the Great Gawd Budd,

as exhibited by M.M. Silvestre and Morand in their noisy and turgid melodrama. But *Izél* has not been the only novelty of Madame Bernhardt’s season, nor even the most remarkable, though certainly, and in every sense, it made the most noise. Jules Lemaitre’s *Les Rois* was produced with no anticipatory flourish of trumpets, and was curtly dismissed by the critics, who found it merely dull. One of them even “went one better,” and, with inimitable gravity, pronounced it “vulgar.” If a prize had been offered for the most inapplicable epithet in the English language, this gentleman would certainly have carried it off. It is precisely its delicacy of style and treatment which prevents the play from coming home to the nerves of the populace; but if we critics were in earnest in our demand for plays that appeal to the intelligence, we should all have been clamouring for an English version of *Les Rois*.

The scene is laid in one of those imaginary kingdoms which have always been the favourite haunts of romance. Mr. Stevenson’s Prince Otto ruled over the Principality of Grünwald; Mr. “Anthony Hope’s” King Rudolf (in *The Prisoner of Zenda*) occupied, or should have occupied, the throne of Ruritania; M. Lemaitre’s Prince Hermann is King (on his father’s abdication) of Alfania. His wife, the Princess Wilhelmine, is a fanatic for the

monarchical idea, in which he himself has ceased to believe. Since the accident of birth has forced such uncongenial duties upon him, at least he will rule in a spirit of beneficent brotherhood, and will lose no opportunity of showing his sympathy with, and his belief in, the downtrodden masses. At the entreaty of his democratic Egeria, the Countess Frida von Talberg, he has released from prison a notorious agitress, Avdotia Litaneff. Avdotia’s first use of her liberty is to fly the flag of revolution in the streets, and she is again arrested. The mob clamours for her release, and the humanitarian king will not take such simple repressive measures as will prevent the demonstration from becoming a riot. He will show his confidence in the People; and the People, misunderstanding him as he misunderstands them, proceed from riot almost to revolt. At last, when they threaten to storm his own palace, Hermann gives the order to fire upon them. The next moment he frantically endeavours to recall the word of command; but it is too late. The rattle of musketry is heard, and is followed by yells of rage and shrieks of agony. Then the noise of the tumult dies away, a great stillness falls upon the scene, and Hermann knows that his ideal kingship has ended, ere it had well begun, in the massacre of women and children by his command, on the very steps, as it were, of his throne. If this be not a tragic situation, I can conceive no meaning in the words; and the tragedy is heightened by the presence of his wife, who shrinks no less than he from bloodshed, and laments even more bitterly than he the untimely idealism which has brought things to this pass, since she believes it to be due to the influence of another woman.

The rest of the play is not as striking as this great scene, but it is throughout a graceful, moving, and genuinely dramatic romance. Hermann himself is a character that might tempt any actor (M. Guitry made him unnecessarily lumpish and lugubrious); Wilhelmine is a noble and beautiful figure, embodied by Madame Bernhardt in such a way as to bring out all its poetry; and the old King Christian, who appears in the first act and the last, is an admirable acting part. To mount the play properly would demand some outlay in costumes, but not one tithe as much as will be required for the Empire dresses and uniforms of *Madame Sans-Gêne*. Yet Sardou’s pseudo-historical vaudeville is at once snapped up, while no one would have at a gift Lemaitre’s beautiful and thoughtful romance. Of course this is not in the least surprising. Sardou is unquestionably a safer investment than Lemaitre. But the fact that *Les Rois* should be loftily pooh-poohed by the majority of the critics, and entirely overlooked by the managers, is, I repeat, a significant commentary upon the boasted “intellectuality” of our theatrical life.

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“The Importance of Being Earnest” may be described as an old-fashioned farce told in the well-known “Wilde” kind of dialogue. So far as intrigue, construction, and invention of comic business are concerned, nothing could be less likely to melt the ice on the Thames. So strongly is this felt that instinctively one looks at the programme to see if there be any acknowledgment of debt upon it. The omission of the words “new and original” is by custom of the theatres tantamount at least to the admission that the work is an adaptation. However, all the qualities of the dialogue are peculiar to the author. Probably no one else would think it funny to say that “divorces are made

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The amount of women who flirt with their husbands in London is simply scandalous. It is washing one's clean linen in public.

The Plot.

John Worthing is a wealthy man, with a house in the country, and a young, pretty ward with whom he is not in love. In order to find an excuse for his frequent visits to London—no reason why he should give any excuses is suggested—he pretends to Cecily Cardew, the ward, that he is visiting his young ne'er-do-well brother Ernest. In town, for reasons undivulged, he passes under the name of Ernest. He has a friend named Algernon Moncrieff, a fashionable young "masher," whose chief humour—like that of many characters in farce—is his gluttony. Algy discovers John's secret, and tries to get an invitation to the country house, but fails: why Worthing will not let him come is a mystery. Now John—passing as Ernest—has fallen in love with the Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax, daughter of Lady Brockwell, and at Algernon's rooms he proposes to her. The proposal is a complicated piece of "Marivaudage," which leads up to her statement that she loves him because his name is Ernest, "a vibrating name" that fascinates her: he has not the courage to confess that he is John. Lady Brockwell refuses her consent to an engagement because she learns from him that, though eligible in every other respect, he is a foundling. From a remark made by Worthing to Gwendolen, Algernon learns his address; how, seeing the intimacy between them, he could have remained till then ignorant of it, one can hardly say. The second act passes in the garden of Worthing's country place. As the most unsophisticated playgoer guessed, Algernon arrives, calling himself Ernest, and pretending to be Worthing's imaginary brother. He falls in love with Cecily at once, and proposes without delay; she, to his surprise, says she has been engaged to him for three months, through hearing what her guardian said of him. There is a heavily-handled scene in the style of Marivaux between them, ending by her saying that she loves him because his name is Ernest. For Mr. Wilde, if lavish with verbal quips, is excessively economical with his comic ideas, and duplicates most of his scenes—a poverty-stricken device practised before his day, but not pushed by anyone else to such extremes. Since in the first act Worthing has announced that he intended to put an end to his imaginary brother no one was surprised to see him arrive in deep mourning and announce that his young brother was dead, and the humour of his meeting Algernon posing as Ernest was also somewhat anticipated. Anon, when the stage was free of the men, Miss Gwendolen arrived and made friends with Cecily, till in their talk they came to the point where they were engaged to the same man—Ernest Worthing. When the others return the girls discover

how they have been deceived, and leave the scene indignantly. There follows a simple antique comic piece of business, in which the men eat and quarrel over tea-cakes and crumpets, and on this the curtain descends. In the last act the difficulties are solved. Algernon appeases Cecily by explaining that he stole the name in order to gain admittance to her. Worthing's case is more difficult. However, it is shown, by one of the oldest stage devices, that he was the long-lost son of Lady Brockwell's sister, so the impediment of birth was removed. There remained the difficult question of the name, for, of course, the prodigious punning jest in the title must be taken into account. It was suggested that Worthing's father might have been named Ernest. Lady Brockwell's memory failed her, but a search through Army Lists showed that it was the case, so all troubles came to an end.

The Performance.

Whether Mr. George Alexander was prudent in giving such a trivial piece the honour of production at his theatre, only the box-office can tell; but it can hardly be pretended that its artistic value gave it a title to such an honour. However, the popular manager, having taken the piece, has done all that he could, save use the blue pencil judiciously and lavishly, to give it a chance. It is handsomely mounted and admirably acted. Mr. Alexander himself as John Worthing shows that he is as brilliant an actor in the comic as in the sentimental. Miss Rose Leclercq played excellently as Lady Brockwell. The Algernon of Mr. Allan Aynesworth was a clever piece of work; whilst Miss Evelyn Millard and Miss Irene Vanbrugh acted charmingly as Cecily and Gwendolen. Mr. Oscar Wilde did not make a speech.

Daily
Chronicle.
Feb. 15. 95.

OSCAR WILDE'S NEW PLAY.

In giving a title to his latest piece, "The Importance of Being Earnest," produced by Mr. George Alexander last night, at the St. James's Theatre, with the utmost success, Mr. Oscar Wilde has descended to the perpetration of a pun. The whole of the story of the three acts deals with a certain "Ernest," who, by the audience is believed to be non-existent until five minutes before the end of a production that is as whimsical in idea as it is eccentric in execution. Neither in treatment nor in material does it in the least resemble the author's preceding contributions to the stage. It is farce exhibiting a tendency towards the Gilbertian method, alike in the peculiar development of an altogether impossible plot, in the humour of much of the stage business, and in the mock gravity of a great portion of the dialogue. Mr. Oscar Wilde has in a measure disarmed criticism by describing his work as "a trivial comedy for serious people." But to those inclined for merriment as well as to those whom the author may consider "serious," the result of the performance will be the same, laughter will reign throughout. Some of the scenes are so ridiculous as to scarcely bear examination—a process not at all likely to be adopted, by the way. The extravagant attitude of the characters, and the obvious leading up of the conversation in places to an easily guessed issue, will probably be looked upon as good points rather than blemishes by audiences who attend the theatre to be amused and know something of Mr. Oscar Wilde's labours. Last night, from the moment a light-hearted young fellow asking his valet why so much more champagne was drunk at select bachelor parties than was usually the case when the guests were married folk, received the reply, "I attribute it to the superiority of the wine," the success of "The Importance of Being Earnest" was not in doubt. Throughout the piece went as well as could be wished by every one concerned.

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The quaintness of the production was seized by the whole of the performers without exception. Another occasion may soon

occur for dealing at length with the various impersonations; but it is sufficient now to say that Mr. Alexander by the buoyancy of his acting as Worthing, Mr. Allan Aynesworth by the easy assurance with which he played Moncrieffe, Miss Rose Leclercq by her stately embodiment of Lady Bracknell, the Misses Irene Vanbrugh and Evelyn Millard as the two young girls, Mrs. Cannings as the repentant governess, and Mr. H. H. Vincent as the Rector of Woolton, could not have been improved upon.

As a contrast to this "trivial" comedy Mr. Alexander has selected for his curtain-raiser a little piece called "In the Season," by Mr. Langdon Elwyn Mitchell, which, with two other productions of like calibre from his pen, formed an afternoon bill at the Strand Theatre in May 1892. Mr. Herbert Waring last night resumed his original character of Sir Harry Collingwood, a generous middle-aged man, who acts as mediator between two capacious lovers, Edward Fairburne and Sybil March. It is a sympathetic and telling work, not in the smallest degree wiredrawn, fully deserving the careful interpretation it received on this occasion from Miss Elliott Page, a young actress with considerable command of feeling, Messrs. Waring and Arthur Royston.

The
Athenaeum
Feb. 16. 95.

DRAMA

THE WEEK.

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OUR modern dramatists can scarcely claim the courage of their convictions. Inexpert or foolhardy conjurors, they raise up spectres before which they quail, or spirits they cannot command. They are compelled to take refuge within the thrice-woven circle of conventionality lest they should be rent to pieces by the demons they have summoned. This tendency on their part is strikingly illustrated in 'A Leader of Men,' a work which, as the production of a dramatist previously untried, inspires much interest, and is, in fact, worthy of consideration. A second fault—less potent for evil than the first, but closely connected with it—is that while the main action is direct and progressive, its march is disturbed by obstacles purposely, deliberately, and almost, so to speak, in sight of the audience, thrown in the way, like the hooks and spikes placed by an enemy on the path of cavalry to impede their advance. What interest and stimulate the spectator are the loves of Robert Llewelyn and Mrs. Dundas, in which those curious in such coincidences may find an oblique reference to the conditions under which an Irish parliamentary leader was discredited and discredited. Llewelyn is the head of the labour party in Parliament, and holds at this moment the balance of power, since, if he carries out his present purpose, the reins of government must drop from the nerveless hands of Lord Killarney, who has vainly sought to bribe him with the offer of

cabinet rank. So actively enlisted on the side of her guardian, Lord Killarney, have been hitherto the sympathies of Mrs. Dundas, that her newly developed intimacy and friendship with Llewelyn are regarded as an attempt to inveigle and betray him. Circumstances lend some faint appearance of colour to this dishonouring suspicion, first broached by a jealous rival. In fact, Mrs. Dundas, who, for unexplained and wholly inadequate reasons, lives apart from her husband, has learnt fervently to love her

new associate, and womanlike has become a convert to his views. When he protests his passion, she listens with rapture, but has sense enough of honour to send him with rebuke away. Womanlike again, having done her duty, she repents. She has resisted his importunity and his pleading, but she cannot withstand his coldness. In a touching and human scene she apologizes for her cruelty, and would, were she not caught in his arms, have sunk in penitence to his feet. A compact of the kind by which blind mortals seek to cheat themselves and destiny is made, and it is temporarily arranged that she will be his in all but facts—his idol, his goddess, his support, his all. She, meanwhile, will hold herself for his sake unspotted and aloof, so that if the merciful gods allow, she may some day share his life. Not long is this poor, futile contract (hopeless and meaningless from the first) to endure. Her conduct has already caused some scandal, and those who are nearest to her and most in authority over her insist on her going back to her husband. The idea is desecration. It is the absolute renunciation of the whispered vows which constitute her new-found sanctity and joy. Go back to her husband! Never. Sooner she will break altogether with her past and accept the new and paradisaical life she has put on one side. Straightway she goes to her lover, and, placing herself once more in his encircling arms, says, "Take me, I am yours; do with me as you will." Here ends, or should end, a tragic story of the ruin of two lives. A month or two to live on honeycomb, and then disillusionment, weariness, commonplace. This life begins even, since at the opening of the last act the woman is contentedly in her lover's house. The door has but to be kept shut and all is over. Everybody enters, however, *ad libitum*, and some weak, meaningless, inconceivable, and, if the fact must be stated, distasteful scenes follow, and furnish opportunity for the obliging and unjustly condemned husband to die. This will not do. If society will not accept your thesis in dramatic shape, leave it alone. Do not, however, palter with your audience. You have stirred the public by your pictures of unhallowed love. Go through with it. Show it triumphant, imperial, vindictory—the conquest by love of all other deities, who it is known are subject to his sway—or heroic, dark, fatal. You have raised your demon, do something with him. In killing the husband you make absolute proclamation of incompetency and ineptitude.

Superb acting on the part of Miss Marion Terry, now out and away the best emotional actress on the stage, commended the piece to the audience, as did the

intrinsic strength of certain scenes, and secured for it a favourable reception. Miss Terry's acting was, indeed, a revelation. Mr. F. Terry was earnest as her lover; Miss May Harvey was touching in a small part; and Mr. Sydney Brough acceptable in a second. The general performance, though some good actors participated in it, was below the level Mr. Carr has taught us to expect.

Sketch.
June 6. '94

ARTISTS OR "ARTISTES."

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Grain at St. George's Hall, and produced an "original and artistic burlesque," entitled "Virginibus Puerisque in Arte." Art is ever a good target to shoot at, but it is not everyone who can hit the bull's-eye as in "Patience." The Academy burlesque fell short, not in what was done, but rather in what might have been done. While bristling with bright points, it rather lacked the cohesive force of a central idea. The action was divided between three art students, three merry maidens (members of "The Pigment Sisterhood" in the "No Flies Seminary"), and a female model, who supplied the friction necessary for the farcical element of the love interest. The other characters com-



prised the visitor of the seminary, a critic of the Bunthorne type, two curators (Hades and Caelum), and an elderly amazonic chaperon, while there was a chorus of students of both sexes. Naturally enough, the dresses were a very strong point in every detail. Miss E. Pyke-Nott made a charming boy, with a Burne-Jones aureole; and her companions, Mr. L. C. E. Baumer and Mr. C. Q. Orchardson, acted with spirit. Their lady-loves were represented by Miss N. du Maurier, who danced cleverly, Miss Venn, and Miss I. Coates, who sang charmingly. Miss Olive Owen, as the model, scored by her dancing. Mr. G. F. Metcalfe was made up and danced very grotesquely as the giant-chaperon. His dance with a tiny child, "Little Nello," was very funny, from mere contrast. The most comic element, however, was contributed by the curators, Mr. S. Jacobs and Mr. W. G. Churcher, the latter making the hit of the evening with a song on the contents of an art gallery; Mr. W. H. Byles was not only a Highflyer, but a high-kicker; Mr. E. H. Read was the critic; and Mr. Wilmshurst was encored with his duet, "Oh, that we two were maying!" sung with Miss Coates. The burlesque was appropriately opened by its author, Mr. C. H. Sims, who played the small part of the hall-porter with quiet, "h"-less humour. Taken all over, the performance was creditable to everybody concerned.

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prised the visitor of the seminary, a critic of the Bunthorne type, two curators (Hades and Cælum), and an elderly amazonic chaperon, while there was a chorus of students of both sexes. Naturally enough, the dresses were a very strong point in every detail. Miss E. Pyke-Nott made a charming boy, with a Burne-Jones aureole; and her companions, Mr. L. C. E. Baumer and Mr. C. Q. Orchardson, acted with spirit. Their lady-loves were represented by Miss N. du Maurier, who danced cleverly, Miss Venn, and Miss I. Coates, who sang charmingly. Miss Olive Owen, as the model, scored by her dancing. Mr. G. F. Metcalfe was made up and danced very grotesquely as the giant-chaperon. His dance with a tiny child, "Little Nello," was very funny, from mere contrast. The most comic element, however, was contributed by the curators, Mr. S. Jacobs and Mr. W. G. Churcher, the latter making the hit of the evening with a song on the contents of an art gallery; Mr. W. H. Byles was not only a Hightyre, but a high-kicker; Mr. E. H. Read was the critic; and Mr. Wilmshurst was encoored with his duet, "Oh, that we two were maying!" sung with Miss Coates. The burlesque was appropriately opened by its author, Mr. C. H. Sims, who played the small part of the hall-porter with quiet, "h"-less humour. Taken all over, the performance was creditable to everybody concerned.

Sketch.

June 6. '94

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MR. PINERO'S NEW PLAY.

[FROM OUR LONDON CORRESPONDENT.]

Another clever problem play by Mr. Pinero, and another brilliant success by Mrs. Patrick Campbell, the actress. Such is the record of "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith" at the Garrick Theatre last night. The scene takes place in Venice. "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith," who has been known in Socialist meetings as "Mad Agnes," is living in a lodging-house on the Grand Canal with Lucas Cleeve, in whom we find Mr. Forbes Robertson. She had nursed him through illness, and they have made a compact to write and work together. She is a widow whose marriage was unhappy. Her husband treated her for a year like a woman of the harem, and for the rest of the time like a beast of burden, and now she has undertaken the mission of exposing "the curse of unhappy marriage." Her ideal is high, her pale face is pure, and she believes in a life of man and woman united by mutual trust without law and ritual. Lucas Cleeve has deserted his own wife. He, too, has been mad enough for a time to think of a platonic union, but regrets for his broken political career steal upon him, and he frets against the shabby greys and browns of his wife's attire. Then the cynical old Duke of Olypherts, in the person of Mr. Hare, tries to separate the two. He cannot but admire the bold eloquence, the honest aim of "the Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith," and she on her side, feeling the growth of love for Lucas, seems to beat the scheming Duke by wearing gay attire. Her sex finds her out. She dresses like a splendid wanton, and Lucas, who is an egotist with the saving grace of some honourable feeling, is charmed. But Agnes, seeing herself in a mirror, faints, and is tended by a virtuous young widow, Lucas's wife and brother arrive in Venice to patch up a sham reconciliation, and at the sacrifice of her own feeling Agnes induces him to go, as he secretly desires, to their hotel. Then the young widow and her brother, a clergyman, invite her to go home with them to Yorkshire. The clergyman writes his address on a Bible, which he gives to Agnes. She turns from it with horror. "You are frightened at it," says the virtuous lady; "you are only a wanton." Agnes, in a moment of frenzy dashes it at the back of the fire, but when her friend leaves she snatches out the Bible at the cost of a burned hand, and, clasping it to her breast, falls on her knees. This is the end of the third act, and really the climax of the play. In the remaining act there is a final struggle in Agnes's mind. Lucas, loving her when he loses her, beseeches her to come to him, but she clings to her lady friend. "I will remember you every day of my life," she says, and thereupon she departs.

The acting of Mrs. Campbell in the principal part was impressive throughout. There was pathos in the deep sad eyes, the white face, the thrilling voice. Her study of the character was finished, and it constantly suggested pathos rather than coarseness—the yearning for a life of service in the interest of the people who fall into the "choking, seething pit" of marriage being always present in her aspect of the character. At the close of the third scene her acting took the audience by storm. A gentleman in the stalls sprang to his feet in enthusiasm, and from all parts of the house came the unfamiliar "Bravos," which were repeated for several minutes. Mr. Forbes Robertson, who has been obliged to abandon the character of Lancelot at the Lyceum, in order to carry out his engagements at the Garrick, made a picturesque young Lucas. The part of the virtuous young widow was ably played by Miss Ellis Jeffreys, who was particularly effective in the scene where she explains her sympathy with Agnes by the confession that her own marriage had been unhappy. Mr. Hare found a congenial character for himself in the cynical old Duke. The play is brilliantly written; indeed, if it had not been for the incisiveness of the dialogue it might at times have proved tedious, for the play works itself out by words and gestures rather than by frequent changes of situation. At the close the audience enthusiastically cheered the actors as well as the author, who bowed his thanks from the stage.

Liverpool
Daily Post
March 14. 95.

P.M.B.

Mr. Allan Monkhouse of Manchester, author of *Books and Plays* (Mathews & Lane), is in my opinion one of the most enlightened and sagacious of critics. Do you think this judgment a trifle emphatic? You will be the less surprised to learn that I happen to agree with almost every word he says about the theatre. And that reminds me of an anecdote, not in any way relevant to Mr. Monkhouse, but illustrating the warmth of one's appreciation of criticism with which one happens to agree. Last autumn I ran down to L—, to see the first production in the provinces of a play which had recently made a great success in London. Returning to town next morning, I bought a local paper at the station, and at once turned to the notice of the previous night's performance. I read it with pleasure, with admiration, with astonishment. Here was a nameless country critic expressing to a nicety my own feelings about the play, both in itself and in its relations! I felt myself, as Marjorie Fleming puts it, "primmed up with majestic pride," for here at last I had found a congenial soul, and actually made a disciple! Then a particular phrase struck me as curiously familiar—and another—and another—until finally a light burst in upon me, and I saw that this was my own account of the play, telegraphed on the first night to a paper in M—, and treasured up by my thrifty L— *confidant* against the time when the piece should come his way. I was amused, but at the same time genuinely disappointed. This hasty sketch, scribbled "in the barren heart of midnight," had seemed to me, for the moment, a thing of singular ability—simply because I chanced to agree with it.

Similarly, my admiration for Mr. Monkhouse's judgments and suggestions must be discounted in view of the fact that they represent with the most gratifying accuracy many of my own preferences and fads. Of course, Mr. Monkhouse has arrived at them quite independently; and he often expresses them so happily as to carry added conviction to my mind. Of Ibsen, indeed, I should write in a different key, but my intervals, so to speak, would be much the same as Mr. Monkhouse's. The plays of Messrs. Henley and Stevenson he treats with discriminative appreciation. Here is the just and aptly-put remark with which his essay opens: "If we are to have good plays, it is well for our men of genius to set about producing them. They are more likely to succeed than the others; indeed, by any fine standard of success, they only can succeed." As for "The Politics of Dramatic Art" its eighteen brief pages are simply chock-full of sound sense. If we had but a dozen men like Mr. Monkhouse in each great provincial centre, the Municipal Theatres which he advocates would soon come within the sphere of practical politics. Only on the subject of pantomime do I slightly dissent from him. He would end it, I would mend it. Mr. Monkhouse has not sufficiently realised the great law of the Indestructibility of Art-Forms. They may be indefinitely modified, but they cannot be stamped out or "sneered" away.

Sketch.
Feb. 27. 95.

Dramatic critics are not, as a rule, in high favour with actors, and they must be rather astonished by the tribute which M. Coquelin has lately paid to their acumen. M. Coquelin has been sued by the *sociétaires* of the Comédie Française for having withdrawn from that body and accepted another engagement in Paris. In the opening speech for the defence it was stated that, in the judgment of the best French critics, M. Coquelin's successors at the Théâtre Français in the parts he had created were quite as good as he. The counsel for the plaintiffs, when he heard this, requested a week to consider his reply. I do not wonder. The most expert advocate might well be staggered by such a plea. M. Coquelin's object was, of course, to show that his late colleagues had lost nothing by his secession; but who will not prefer to believe that his remarkable admission was the spontaneous frankness of a noble mind? I can see M. Coquelin sitting at the Français and shedding tears of joy to discover that he has left no gap in an admirable company of artists.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING OSCAR.

It is not to 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 influence them, by their whispers, wild shouts of applause, or to scold them into going to see a play it does not fancy. But the Public is a fickle thing; it is sometimes perverse, and even obstinate, and it has lately 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, standing the fact that its point and object have not been understood: I mean the overthrowing of the contemporary ideal of the disproportionate value of woman in modern life. "A man's life revolves in curves of emotion: it is on the straight lines of intellect that a man's life progresses. . . . If you can keep a man in love, and love him in return, you have done all that we ask of him." Thus Mr. Wilde places the newest woman in a very charming perspective of softness, of gentleness, of forgiveness. And are these not her virtues? He has shown that, as a man can love, knowing every detail of a woman—loving her, it may be, for these faults and the better—so might she also love without idealising him, without vainly to deprive him of his natural sins. After the first shock of seeing her husband doomed to disgrace and exposure, we see Lady Algy by his side in sympathising fellowship, ready to mourn with him but not to reproach him with his fault. "The Importance of being Oscar," again, is deliciously, airily irresponsible: an extraordinary effort of wit and humour. In brilliant dialogue Mr. Wilde is a rival; and how versatile an artist he is! Not only a poet, an novelist, "an amateur of beautiful things and a dilettante of delightful," but one of the most brilliant playwrights of modern times. Why carp at "improbability" in what is confessedly the merest bubble of fancy? Why not acknowledge, honestly, a debt of gratitude to one who adds so unmistakably to the gaiety of the nation? He called before the curtain, with almost uproarious applause, at James's on Thursday night, Mr. Wilde must assuredly have felt, in the subtle enjoyment, all the Importance of being Oscar.

Sketch.
Feb. 20.
1895.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST.

John Worthing, of the Manor House, Woolton, Shropshire, in order to win his pretty ward, Cecily, with whom he was not in love, has at visits to town, imagined the existence of a younger brother, he called Ernest, and pretended that he went to see him. When don he, for no discoverable reason, called himself Ernest. These were not culpable in character, for he was courting honestly the Gwendolen Fairfax. Now, the two girls had what one may call an views about names. By the way, did not Lytton, in "The Two Admirers," use Sterne's idea to some extent? Lytton's name naturally into mind when one thinks of Mr. Oscar Wilde, for in one aspect of his brilliant author of "Pelham" suggests the modern apostle of culture—namely, 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 of the description of him given by John—in which she reminds one of a girl of Burton in his "Anatomy of Melancholy"—and, being whose studies in French seem to have extended to Marivaux, she went so far as to engage herself to this mere fiction. As soon as she, posing as Ernest, proposed to Gwendolen, he was accepted, and was rather embarrassed to hear her say that his name, as it vibrated in her soul. However, when he spoke to Lady Algy—her mother—difficulties arose, for he happened to be a friend of John's, and Lady Bracknell could not accept as son-in-law a nameless man found in a bag at a station. Gwendolen promised to be true to her mother's opposition. It so happened that Gwendolen's cousin, Algernon Moncrieff, was a friend of Worthing. Algy for a long time believed that his name was Ernest, and did not know his country address. By accident

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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.

John had decided to put an end to the imaginary existence of Ernest, so he bought himself a suit of mourning of the deepest dye, and came down to Shropshire with the sad sham news of his brother's death, on the day that Algy was paying his surreptitious visit. Of course, he was startled to find Algy in such a guise, but, for his own sake, was compelled to abstain from "giving him away." Gwendolen followed her sweetheart to the Manor House, and, to her surprise, discovered that he had such a pretty ward as Cecily. The two girls, who are as unlike nature and like one another as is conceivable, promptly became great friends.

Such a friendship could hardly last, seeing that each believed herself to be engaged to Ernest Worthing. Soon they began to speak of their love-affairs; then arose a misunderstanding, which naturally began a quarrel. Peace was restored by the appearance of John and Algy, for the girls discovered the fraud as to the name that had been practised upon them, and therefore joined forces in an attack upon the impostors. So the men were left alone, and buried their grief in an orgie of crumpets and tea-cakes.

Of course, as the play is a farce—"trivial comedy" is the official description, but only one-half of it is correct—a happy ending had to be contrived. So the author, with daring simplicity, took advantage of the fact that John was a foundling. By the aid of Lady Bracknell and Miss Prism, the governess of Cecily, it was discovered that his father actually was the husband of Lady Bracknell's sister. This removed the difficulty of the question of birth, and only Gwendolen's attachment to the name Ernest remained as an impediment. It was suggested that his father's name might have been Ernest, and that the son should have been christened after him. Lady Bracknell could not recollect the name of her brother-in-law, but, by aid of the Army List, the question was settled affirmatively. Algernon was pardoned because his imposture was due solely to his desire to see Cecily.

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."

One would rather have Mr. George Alexander doing work of greater value than playing a Charles Hawtrey part, yet must admit that it is pleasant to see how cleverly he did it. In the quickness and alertness of his really comic acting he gave a valuable lesson to the others, who, with the exception of Miss Rose Leclercq—she was an ideal Lady Bracknell—played rather heavily. It would be unfair to suggest that the acting of Miss Evelyn Millard, Miss Irene Vanbrugh, and Mr. Allan Aynesworth is not sound and clever, but at present their style is not sufficiently crisp and light.