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Oscar Wilde
Scrapbook

Vol. 8

OSCAR WILDE.

By FRANCIS WATT.

I saw Oscar Wilde some five or six times at the most. I had no occasion to note any of them except the last, and though I remember him very well I am vague as to date and subject of talk. However, it must have been somewhere in the eighties, at Henley's house, at Chiswick. A band of us used to go there on Saturday nights. I think we went, as Clarendon says men repaired to Falkland's house, "as to a college." There was much to learn and even more to amuse. I have never heard such good talk either before or since, and I am not like to hear it again. Wilde used to journey out there to join in the talk, which, as a listener once said to me, was as the incessant play of swords in the hands of masters of fencing. Wilde, oddly enough, seemed the most conventional of the group. He was in evening dress; he talked well indeed, but without extravagance. What pose he had was for others; he did not bulk as the most prominent figure.

Henley himself was a master of talk. He had wide knowledge and wide sympathy, admirable expression, a keen sense of the humorous; and there was R. A. M. Stevenson—strange, weird, unique, a very magician—to hear whose talk was to "hear a wizard music roll." On the instant he would rearrange the whole universe on a whimsical, original, highly delightful, perfectly coherent, and perfectly ridiculous plan. R. L. S., his more famous but not more gifted cousin, has described the two men as Burly and Spring-heeled Jack in his famous essay on "Talk and Talkers." His phrase, the "insane lucidity of his conclusions," admirably describes the immutable "Jack." If Wilde held his own with two such masters he did well. And the subjects? "Quicquid agunt homines," but most of all art and letters. The only definite thing I recall is a little joke of Henley's. There was a large sunflower in the garden, and as we came out late one night Henley stood on the threshold. "Spare my sunflower, Oscar," he said. The days passed, but I cannot tell why Wilde came no more. I was to see him but once again. I was present at the Old Bailey when he was prosecutor in a libel case. I listened to his cross-examination by Sir Edward, then Mr. Carson, wellnigh the most skilled counsel at the English Bar in that style of work. He had abundance of material, and in one fatal hour I saw a character, a life—or, at any rate, all that makes life worth living—dissolve and pass like the baseless fabric of a vision.

Of late Wilde's name has come again before the public. His plays, and no wonder, are in favour at the theatres. There are several lives of him, apologetic or laudatory. His works are on the stalls, and there is scarcely anything to object to in his written words. We feel kindly towards the authors we admire. They have given us pleasure, and when they strike a personal note we think of them as friends. And there is a see-saw in the reputation of all famous men; we laud or blame them in excess. How difficult to strike a just medium, and especially in the case of this brilliant, perplexing figure of the late Victorian era—this man whose life was so remarkable, whose end was so unfortunate that it might glut the malice of his bitterest foe!

He was a brilliant, talented, and delightful writer, but he had no scrap of real genius. He realised his own limitations. At Oxford he was a gifted and successful student. He knew much of the art and letters of Greece and Rome and mediæval Italy, and his taste was excellent, and therefore I think his despair was sometimes great. Did he not feel himself a dwarf amongst those giants? A man of handsome presence, a reasonably prosperous career lay before him. Yet at the best it was that of a minor author, and his ambition was from the first unbounded. If he could not have come by fair means he

would get it by foul. He was not in truth famous he might be infact notorious; better to reign in hell than serve in heaven. People talked of him as a fool, but they talked of him. In truth he was no fool; he had a clear, deliberate purpose, and he set his teeth and went through much disagreeable experience to attain it. He was pelted and ridiculed for his dress and his talk, his cult of the peacock feather and the sunflower, but he had the benefits he counted on. He once frankly stated that he wrote a volume of poems which no publisher would accept until he ran the æsthetic craze. Then the same publishers gave him highly satisfactory terms.

As regards the æsthetic doctrine, the truth lies in a nutshell. He had good taste, he had known what was best in the art and letters of the old world; there was much to carp at in the vulgarity of the mid-Victorian era, and we are not an artistic people, and like fools in general we mock at what we cannot understand and do not appreciate. That was the grain of truth in Wilde's bushel of chaff. And the grain bore fruit. I think we are not so vulgar or clumsy or brutal—perhaps we are not so simple or so honest or so reasonable—as we were fifty years ago. Still, we are in some ways better, and Wilde's influence was some small factor in the advance. But when a man attains notice by illegitimate means he puts himself on a descending grade. There must be a new sensation to counteract the forces pushing him back to obscurity; and so Wilde was led first to play with the vices of the antique world and then to become their slave, until the crash became inevitable. Just before that crash his methods to obtain notice were perfectly successful. A greater poet and a better man had a century earlier defiantly welcomed the fame brought him by actions which had certainly banished him from the chaste Saturday night circle of his own cottage—

"The maid they talk, I'm kint the better,
E'en let them clash."

One wonders if Wilde ever read or ever remembered the lines. However, he was rich and honoured. His income had reached £8000; publishers would give anything for his writings; he was the idol of a large body of highly placed men. "Fortune had so turned my head that I fancied I could do whatever I chose." It required but a breath to destroy this. A writer talks of the "fatal insolence" of his attack on Queensberry. This is the common opinion, and it is absurd. Inactivity had been equally if not more fatal; he must crush or be crushed.

Of his methods or trick of his style the most common was the inverted commonplace. Very successful at first, as such things are, it began to pall. "The English have everything in common with the Americans, except, of course, language;" or "Industry, the root of all ugliness;" or "Enough is as good as a meal—" but one need not multiply illustrations. Less crude effects are gained by distorting the relative importance of things. At Oxford he said he was "determined to live up to his blue china." He would curse Bayswater as the prophets cursed Babylon, or profess an exaggerated esteem for his own writings. He had worked hard all day at a poem, he said; in the forenoon he had taken away a comma, and in the afternoon he had put it back again. It were unfair to deny him more solid merits. His poems are vastly clever, and they occa-

sionally rise into genuinely powerful expression, yet they are a curious collection of echoes. Is not this from "Adonais," or this, again, from "In Memoriam," or this, again, from "The Ancient Mariner"? you ask.

Even more present, though not so obvious, because more remote, and, as it seems, more permissible, are the echoes of the Hellenic world. There is occasional extravagance, as the famous "Neither for God nor for His Enemies," but most of his poems are really very admirable college exercises. There is one exception, "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," written after his release. It is much in the manner of "The Ancient Mariner," and yet although the echo haunts the reader, it now and again reaches high, original level. He imputed feelings to the mass of prisoners which they cannot possibly have had, but as it pictures forth his own emotions, the note of sincerity is unmistakable. The horror and degradation of the prison came to him most strongly when he brooded over it in freedom, and he sets it forth with direct force. Here you have surely the lyric cry of personal emotion.

As a Jissen Women's University Library though not remarkable; he had not that wide grasp of life, that fertility of invention, that close-

ness of observation which go to the making of a great novelist. The "Portrait of Dorian Gray" and "The Crime of Lord Arthur Saville," to take but these examples, are readable and noteworthy, but again you catch the echo. Wilde was curiously imitative; his working coat was copied from that in which Balzac toiled, and the "Portrait" obviously suggests "Le Peau de Chagrin." He dressed his hair on the model of the bust of Nero in the Louvre, and much in him suggests the decadence, though it may be the impressive decadence, of the Roman Emperors. It is as a dramatist alone that his work has any chance of permanence, though it is not likely that what is so closely modelled to the style of one age can hit the taste of successive generations. Of the whole circle of brilliant and gifted Elizabethan dramatists, Shakespeare alone holds the stage to-day, as, indeed, he holds everything.

Yet Wilde as playwright must remain with us for some time at least. Authors, critics, actors have borne testimony to his admirable stage effect. Almost by intuition he understood what was wanted in the theatre. His comedies are in their own little genre perfection. An incident in society life is taken; it is made the subject of an admirable story, the talk is witty and agreeable, amusing epigrams abound, everything is in the best possible taste. You are pleased and amused in a worthy way, you have a legitimate satisfaction at a brilliant and intellectual effect. Such pieces are common on the French stage, but they are not so with us, in spite of countless adaptations. Here Wilde is more original, more himself than elsewhere; if the pieces owe to French influence, that is not apparent. "Lady Windermere's Fan" is an ideal trifle of its kind. The tragedies are not on the same level. "Salome" has passages of power and splendour, but, as you so often find in Wilde, its effects are gained by means neither entirely wholesome nor entirely legitimate.

One remarkable work remains for notice. Whilst in prison Wilde wrote "De Profundis," given to the world only after his death. There are no epigrams and no pose; it is the real utterance of the soul, the sweet fruit of adversity. You cannot praise it without reserve; parts are hysterical, and can you wonder? The character of Christ as the great artist of life is fantastic, and the account of His teaching almost grotesque. "To turn an interesting thief into a tedious honest man was not His aim; the conversion of a publican into a Pharisee would not have seemed to Him a great achievement. But in a manner not yet understood of the world He regarded sin and suffering as being in themselves beautiful, holy things." Yet he seems to me sincere when he ranks himself with outcasts of the Gospel, with the Magdalen at the feet of the Saviour, with the woman who compared herself to the dogs that fed on the crumbs. He sees that in the future humility and submission are for him the essential virtues, that in seclusion, in communion with nature, in toil in his own vocation, he may yet work out a future for himself, and so the day star of hope shines—tremulous and uncertain indeed, but yet so as to light up the darkness of his prison cell. And it is all written in simple, beautiful English. He tells of his past life. "There was no pleasure I did not experience. I threw the pearl of my soul into a cup of wine. I went down the primrose path to the sound of flutes. I lived on honeycomb." And, again, with perfect felicity he has sketched the character of the Philistine for all time. "In their heavy inaccessibility to ideas, their dull respectability, their tedious orthodoxy, their worship of vulgar success, their entire preoccupation with the gross, materialistic side of life, and their ridiculous estimate of themselves and their importance, the Jews of Jerusalem in Christ's day were the exact counterpart of the British Philistine of our own." I will not quote more. Beautiful and truthful much of this tract is. Again, indeed, as everywhere else, you catch an echo, but it is of the exquisite words of our English version of the Scriptures.

So Wilde planned in his prison cell. We know it was not to be. Even as she who fled from the cities of the plain, he looked back and was lost. No doubt he tried to work, but the power to compose seemed well-nigh dead in him. As already noted, the "Ballad of Reading Gaol" was his only post-prison effort. No one who studies Wilde to any purpose will judge him a bad or vicious man. He was weak and he was vain. His discipline came too late to save, and could only destroy.

30 January 1908

"Times" Literary Supplement.

On February 13 Messrs. Methuen will issue the first six volumes of the uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's authentic works. The editor, Mr. Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor, has made arrangements with Mr. Charles Carrington, the publisher and owner of the copyright of "Dorian Gray," by which the novel will be issued in exactly the same style and format as the other volumes published by Messrs. Methuen. In order that the book may be hall-marked as an integral part of the only authorized and complete edition which can be published for a great many years, Mr. Ross has added a short prefatory note. "Dorian Gray" will constitute the seventh of the thirteen volumes. Though Messrs. Methuen now own the majority of the Wilde copyrights, many important items belong to Mr. John Lane, Mr. David Nutt, Mr. Arthur Humphreys, and Mr. Giles, of Broad-street, Oxford, who have kindly granted a licence to Mr. Ross for the publication in Messrs. Methuen's limited edition of works which still remain their property. Among the new features of the edition may be mentioned *The Duchess of Padua*, a blank verse tragedy in five acts; *The Florentine Tragedy*, a one-act blank verse tragedy performed in 1906 by the Literary Theatre Club; while the volume containing "De Profundis" has been augmented by the passages which have hitherto only appeared in the German, with four letters written by Wilde from Reading to his literary executor, with other matter published for the first time, several new poems, and hitherto unpublished essays. Fragments of a lost play, &c., will be included in a volume of miscellanies.

On Feb. 13th Messrs. Methuen will issue the first six volumes of the uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's authentic works. The editor, Mr. Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor, has made arrangements with Mr. Charles Carrington, the publisher and owner of the copyright of "Dorian Gray," by which the novel will be issued in exactly the same style and format as the other volumes published by Messrs. Methuen, with a short prefatory note by Mr. Ross. Though Messrs. Methuen now own the majority of the Wilde copyrights, many important items belong to Mr. John Lane, Mr. David Nutt, Mr. Arthur Humphreys, and Mr. Giles, of Broad-street, Oxford, who have kindly granted a licence to Mr. Ross for the publication, in Messrs. Methuen's limited edition, of works which still remain their property.

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Among the new features of the edition may be mentioned "The Duchess of Padua," a blank verse tragedy in five acts (of which only a pirated prose version has appeared in America), and "The Florentine Tragedy," a one-act blank verse tragedy, performed in 1906 by the Literary Theatre Club. The volume containing "De Profundis" has been augmented by the passages which have hitherto only appeared in the German, with four letters written by Wilde from Reading to his literary executor and other matter published for the first time. Several new poems and hitherto unpublished essays, fragments of a lost play, and other things will be included in a volume of "Miscellanies."

Publishers' Circular,

February
8.1908.

SALE JOTTINGS

MESSRS. HODGSON included in their sale last week the library of the late Captain St. John Frederick and other properties, the following being the chief prices realised :—

Wilde's Ideal Husband and The Importance of Being Earnest, large paper, 2 vols., £6 12s. 6d. (Spencer) ;

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Jan. 31.

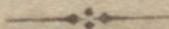
Daily Telegraph,

17

It was announced some time ago in these columns that Messrs. Methuen had made their plans for the publication of a complete edition of the works of Oscar Wilde. They now own the majority of the copyrights, but many of importance still belong to Mr. John Lane, Mr. David Nutt, Mr. Arthur Humphreys, and Mr. Giles, of Oxford, and these gentlemen have given Mr. Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor, permission to include their property in Messrs. Methuen's edition, of which he is editor. The edition is, it must be understood, limited. Mr. Ross has further been able to make arrangements with Mr. Charles Carrington, publisher and owner of the copyright of "Dorian Gray," by which that novel will be published in exactly the same style as the other volumes in the complete edition.



The first six volumes will be published next month and "Dorian Gray" will form the seventh of the thirteen contemplated. A good deal which at present is unknown to all but a very few will be given. There is, for instance, "The Duchess of Padua," a blank verse tragedy in five acts, which was produced in New York in 1891, but even the name is strange in this country. A less ambitious work is "The Florentine Tragedy," in one act, performed in 1906 by the Literary Theatre Club, but otherwise unknown. "In Profundis," which is probably the most widely read whether it be the best or not, of all Wilde's work has included in it the passages which have hitherto only appeared in the German, and four letters written by Wilde from Reading to Mr. Ross. Several new poems and essays and fragments of a lost play will be given in a volume of "Miscellanies."



Daily Telegraph

Jan: 28

STRAUSS'S "SALOME."

From Our Own Correspondent.

NAPLES, Monday.

A curious agitation has arisen among the members of high Neapolitan society who subscribe to the San Carlo Opera House against Strauss's "Salome," which is to be produced about the beginning of February. It is not the subject of the opera which has aroused the scruples of the subscribers, nor the erotic portions of the libretto, but they have been scandalised by the religious section of the opera. The *Giorno* states that in all the elegant salons of Naples signatures are being obtained to a protest against the opera in the name of morality. It appears that Cardinal Prisco, Archbishop of Naples, is taking part in the agitation.

Star.

February 14. 1908

The first performance of "Salome" in Naples has been a great success. There was a good deal of opposition to the performance on religious grounds, and also because an Italian firm of publishers claimed to have the exclusive rights for the performance of the opera in Italy.

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The first six volumes of the uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's works will be published by Messrs. Methuen on February 13. The edition is being edited by Mr. Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor.

Sunday Times Feb. 2. 1908.

Oscar Wilde's Works.

On February 13 Messrs. Methuen will issue the first six volumes of the uniform and complete edition of Oscar Wilde's authentic works. The editor, Mr. Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor, has made arrangements with Mr. Charles Carrington, the publisher and owner of the copyright of "Dorian Gray," by which that novel will be issued in exactly the same style and format as the other volumes of the series. To this Mr. Ross has added a short prefatory note. Though Messrs. Methuen now own the majority of the Wilde copyrights, many important items belong to Mr. John Lane, Mr. David Nutt, Mr. Arthur Humphreys, and Mr. Giles, of Oxford, who have kindly granted a license to Mr. Ross for the publication of works which still remain their property. Among the new features of the edition may be mentioned: "The Duchess of Padua," a blank verse tragedy in five acts (of which only a pirated prose version has appeared in America), and "The Florentine Tragedy," a one-act blank verse tragedy, performed in 1906 by the Literary Theatre Club; while the volume containing "De Profundis" has been augmented by the passages which have hitherto only appeared in the German, with four letters written by Wilde from Reading to his literary executor. By special permission of THE SUNDAY TIMES, some articles contributed by Wilde to that journal will be included in a volume of Miscellanies with other unpublished matter.

Westminster Gazette. February 4. 1908.

On February 13 Messrs. Methuen will issue the first six volumes of the uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's authentic works. The editor, Mr. Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor, has made arrangements with Mr. Charles Carrington, the publisher and owner of the copyright of "Dorian Grey," by which the novel will be issued in exactly the same style and form as the other volumes published by Messrs. Methuen. Though Messrs. Methuen now own the majority of the Wilde copyrights, many important items belong to Mr. John Lane, Mr. David Nutt, Mr. Arthur Humphreys, and Mr. Giles, of Broad-street, Oxford, who have kindly granted a licence to Mr. Ross for the publication in Messrs. Methuen's limited edition of works which still remain their property.

Glasgow News. Feb. 6.

It is now definitely settled that the complete library edition of Wilde's works is to appear. The publishers have got over all the preliminary difficulties, and these were many. Several copyrights were thought to be almost impossible, and although Messrs. Methuen were careful in the original prospectus to state in how far the set would be incomplete, it would have been a great mistake to go on before an arrangement for the inclusion of the missing volumes was concluded. The subscriptions to this edition, I believe, are so well forward that only a few copies remain for sale. Six volumes will appear at once.

On February 13 Messrs. Methuen will issue the first six volumes of the uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's authentic works. The editor, Mr. Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor, has made arrangements with Mr. Charles Carrington, the publisher and owner of the copyright of "Dorian Grey," by which the novel will be issued in exactly the same style and form as the other volumes published by Messrs. Methuen. Though Messrs. Methuen now own the majority of the Wilde copyrights, many important items belong to Mr. John Lane, Mr. David Nutt, Mr. Arthur Humphreys, and Mr. Giles, of Broad Street, Oxford, who have kindly granted a license to Mr. Ross for the publication in Messrs. Methuen's limited edition of works which still remain their property.

On the 13th Messrs. Methuen will publish the first six volumes of the uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's works, edited by Mr. Robert Ross. They will be "The Duchess of Padua," "Salome and Other Plays," "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "An Ideal Husband." "The Duchess of Padua" is a new play—a blank-verse tragedy in five acts, of which, so far, there has only been a pirated prose version in America. There will be a good deal of hitherto unpublished work by Wilde in this uniform edition, as, for instance, "The Florentine Tragedy," a short, poetic tragedy.

The volume containing Wilde's remarkable essay and study, "De Profundis," has been augmented by the passages which have hitherto only appeared in the German. The same volume will contain four letters written by Wilde, from Reading, to his literary executor, and two letters on prison reform which he addressed to "The Daily Chronicle." Several new poems and essays with fragments of a lost play will be given in a volume of miscellanies. The copyrights of Wilde's works are variously held, but by arrangement everything will appear in the present edition, including "Dorian Gray," for which Mr. Ross has written a prefatory note.

February 7. 1908

Messrs. Methuen write us, with reference to our paragraphs of Wednesday on their collected edition of Oscar Wilde's works, that "Dorian Grey" will not be included in it. The present publisher of "Dorian Grey" is to issue it in a style uniform with the collected edition.

Evening Times.

Feb. 6. Glasgow.

On the 13th Messrs. Methuen will publish the first six volumes of the uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's works, edited by Mr. Robert Ross. They will be "The Duchess of Padua," "Salome and Other Plays," "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "An Ideal Husband."

February 8. 1908

Evening Standard and St. James's

Messrs. Methuen will issue next Thursday the first six volumes of the complete works of Oscar Wilde, edited by Mr. Robert Ross, containing "The Duchess of Padua," a blank verse tragedy in five acts, "Salome and Other Plays," "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "An Ideal Husband." The edition will include hitherto unpublished work, including "The Florentine Tragedy," a short poetic tragedy, and the passages of "De Profundis" hitherto only included in the German version. The same firm has in preparation a volume of essays by Mr. Hilaire Belloc, "On Nothing and Kindred Subjects," which I am told are better than anything he has done, and he has already done some very good things.

THE BOOK WORLD.

This day week will appear the first six volumes of Messrs. Methuen's uniform edition of the works of the late Oscar Wilde, and the remaining volumes (seven or eight in number) will appear together some time next month. The first batch consists of "The Duchess of Padua" (never before published in book form), "Salome, and Other Plays," "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "An Ideal Husband." Many of these, of course, have been out of print for some years, and much material gathered into the later volumes has never been identified as Wilde's except by his own memoranda, the albums of his friends, and the recollection of various editors in whose periodicals it appeared. Among these fugitive things there is an important series of a hundred articles that Wilde contributed to the "Pall Mall Gazette," ranging from reviews and "specials" to those front-page articles which are known in the office by the esoteric name of "followers," because they follow the "leader."

One of these followers is an account that Wilde was commissioned to write of Whistler's "Ten o'clock" lecture, and Wilde's record of that curious monologue was a landmark in the quarrel that lasted between the two wits for so many years. By the way, speaking of Wilde and the "Pall Mall Gazette," we are reminded of an occasion in which the aesthete figured as one of a very distinguished list of guests on a very odd occasion. Those were the days when Mr. Stuart Cumberland was about to stagger humanity with his marvellous powers as a thought-reader, and he was invited to give a demonstration to which a number of famous contributors were invited, Wilde among the rest. The test was to hit upon the exact thought of any given person, and if possible to trace the object he had in mind. The late Grant Allen, who was a pretty frequent visitor and contributor, was deputed to set the test, and he hit upon a shrewd idea which led to a most interesting chase. There has never probably been such a curious hunt through London streets since a fox broke through a hanging procession on the way to Tyburn and escaped into the verdant groves of Paddington.

In the early days of the paper, the late James Greenwood had made himself a name as "The Amateur Casual," and to illustrate to his colleagues the reality of the experiences he so vividly described in print he brought back a sample of London workhouse bread. It was put under a glass case and kept among the office curiosities until it acquired an aspect as of a Pompeian relic. People "in the know," you may say, came miles to see it, and bounce its flinty substance on the office floor. It was kept, not at the "Pall Mall Gazette" office in Northumberland-street, but at a branch office, loftily known as the Art Department, somewhere at the back of the block, with an address in Craven-street. This was the thought-reader's unknown destination. Accepting the bandage across his eyes, and taking Grant Allen by the wrist, Mr. Cumberland led the way slowly into the street, with a cohort of celebrities in his wake. The curious procession straggled down the street, and round the tiny alley to the left until some of the witnesses must have thought they were bound for a grimy expedition through the arches that represent the old Adelphi caverns which were the haunt of little David Copperfield. The man with the bandage turned, however, and in a couple of minutes he had won. There were other tests, but this was the chief event, and it is immortalised, by another hand than Wilde's, in our office file.

Western Daily Press.

Feb. 7.

Among the fugitive things appearing in the collected edition of Wilde's works there is an important series of a hundred articles that Wilde contributed to the "Pall Mall Gazette," ranging from reviews and "specials" to those front-page articles which are known in the office by the esoteric name of "followers," because they follow the "leader." One of these followers is an account that Wilde was commissioned to write of Whistler's "Ten o'clock" lecture, and Wilde's record of that curious monologue was a landmark in the quarrel that lasted between the two wits for so many years.

Messrs. Methuen will publish next week the first six volumes of a uniform edition of the works of Oscar Wilde. The edition will contain fourteen volumes in all.

Morning Leader.

Feb. 8.

The first six volumes of Messrs. Methuen's uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's works will be published on 13 Feb. In addition to "The Duchess of Padua," a hitherto unpublished play, the titles are "Salome and Other Plays," "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "An Ideal Husband." The edition is limited to 1,000 copies on hand-made paper, and there are 80 copies on Japanese vellum.

Tatler. February 19. 1908

Ambassador and Financier.

Being a close friend of the King's the Marquis de Soveral is naturally somewhat intimate with Sir Ernest Cassel, the eminent financier, and incidentally his Majesty's confidential adviser upon his financial affairs. The two met at Marienbad a year or two ago when a play of the late Oscar Wilde was being performed there. "I say, Soveral," said Sir Ernest, "have you seen *The Importance of Being Earnest*?" "No," replied "Blue Monkey" with a meaning smile, "but I have often seen the importance of being Ernest—Cassel."

97 Le Gallienne (Richard) THE BOOK BILLS OF NABOISSUS, an account rendered by Richard Le Gallienne, SECOND EDITION, post 8vo, cloth, bevelled edges, top edges gilt, AS NEW, 186d (pub 4s6d net) 1892

The most famous book bill of Mr. Le Gallienne was surely that for the *Encyc. Britannica*, which he bought only for Mr. Watts-Dunton's article on Poetry. (See Douglas on T. Watts-Dunton, p. 1.) But his Naboissus was a good buyer too, and a good admirer. "He had pre-eminently that capacity which most fine men have of falling in love with men" (p. 83); and "the Oscar Wilde of modern legend were not more a dweller in Nirvana" (p. 84).

Pall Mall Gazette, February 7. 1908

INDISCRIMINATE.*

This book on Mr. Wilde is quite harmless; but, we fear, also quite useless. It is not tainted with the half-silly, quite unpleasant sort of hero-worship which is now somewhat prevalent; it is a study of Wilde's works, and of his literary position. Unfortunately Mr. Ingleby shows no signs of any special ability for literary criticism, or for the study of Wilde in particular. His book is written with a high seriousness that would make the subject of it, we fancy, smile considerably; and when we come to pages on pages of prose paraphrase of "The Sphinx," we can scarcely restrain from smiles ourselves. The book is, in fact, a kind of Baedeker to Wilde's works; and to apply anything so gross and practical as a German guide book to that author's dainty and evanescent fancies is to court disaster. Those familiar with "The Sphinx" will understand what we mean from such a sentence as that of Mr. Ingleby's, "Wilde catalogues through the whole Egyptian mythology; he is inclined to give first place to Ammon." We are sorry not to be able to say anything more favourable of this book; as we were heartily glad to discover it is an attempt to discuss Wilde's literary position, and that it shuns, as far as possible, peering into the miseries of his life. It may do good if it sends some few more readers to the exquisite fairy-stories, surely the best since Andersen's; or compels the critics to reconsider the true character of that singular *tour de force*, Dorian Gray.

* "Oscar Wilde." By L. C. Ingleby. (London: T. Werner Laurie.) 12s. 6d. net.

18 **Outlook.**

February 1. 1908.

The first six volumes of the uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's works will be published by Messrs. Methuen on February 13. The edition is being edited by Mr. Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor.

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Sunday Times

Feb: 2.
1908.

Oscar Wilde's Works.

On February 13 Messrs. Methuen will issue the first six volumes of the uniform and complete edition of Oscar Wilde's authentic works. The editor, Mr. Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor, has made arrangements with Mr. Charles Carrington, the publisher and owner of the copyright of "Dorian Gray," by which that novel will be issued in exactly the same style and format as the other volumes of the series. To this Mr. Ross has added a short prefatory note. Though Messrs. Methuen now own the majority of the Wilde copyrights, many important items belong to Mr. John Lane, Mr. David Nutt, Mr. Arthur Humphreys, and Mr. Giles, of Oxford, who have kindly granted a license to Mr. Ross for the publication of works which still remain their property. Among the new features of the edition may be mentioned: "The Duchess of Padua," a blank verse tragedy in five acts (of which only a pirated prose version has appeared in America), and "The Florentine Tragedy," a one-act blank verse tragedy, performed in 1906 by the Literary Theatre Club; while the volume containing "De Profundis" has been augmented by the passages which have hitherto only appeared in the German, with four letters written by Wilde from Reading to his literary executor. By special permission of THE SUNDAY TIMES, some articles contributed by Wilde, which have not previously been included in a volume of Miscellanies with other unpublished matter.

Westminster Gazette.

February 4.
1905

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Glasgow News.

Feb. 6.

It is now definitely settled that the complete library edition of Wilde's works is to appear. The publishers have got over all the preliminary difficulties, and these were many. Several copyrights were thought to be almost impossible, and although Messrs Methuen were careful in the original prospectus to state in how far the set would be incomplete, it would have been a great mistake to go on before an arrangement for the inclusion of the missing volumes was concluded. The subscriptions to this edition, I believe, are so well forward that only a few copies remain for sale. Six volumes will appear at once.

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Feb: 5. 1908

Daily Chronicle.

On the 13th Messrs. Methuen will publish the first six volumes of the uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's works, edited by Mr. Robert Ross. They will be "The Duchess of Padua," "Salome and Other Plays," "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "An Ideal Husband." "The Duchess of Padua" is a new play—a blank-verse tragedy in five acts, of which, so far, there has only been a pirated prose version in America. There will be a good deal of hitherto unpublished work by Wilde in this uniform edition, as, for instance, "The Florentine Tragedy," a short, poetic tragedy.

The volume containing Wilde's remarkable essay and study, "De Profundis," has been augmented by the passages which have hitherto only appeared in the German. The same volume will contain four letters written by Wilde, from Reading, to his literary executor, and two letters on prison reform which he addressed to "The Daily Chronicle." Several new poems and essays with fragments of a lost play will be given in a volume of miscellanies. The copyrights of Wilde's works are variously held, but by arrangement everything will appear in the present edition, including "Dorian Gray" for which Mr. Ross has written a prefatory note.

February 7, 1908

Messrs. Methuen write us, with reference to our paragraphs of Wednesday on their collected edition of Oscar Wilde's works, that "Dorian Grey" will not be included in it. The present publisher of "Dorian Grey" is to issue it in a style different from the collected edition.

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Evening Times.

Feb. 6

Glasgow.

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Jessen Women's University Library

February 8, 1908

Evening Standard and St. James's

Messrs. Methuen will issue next Thursday the first six volumes of the complete works of Oscar Wilde, edited by Mr. Robert Ross, containing "The Duchess of Padua," a blank verse tragedy in five acts, "Salome and Other Plays," "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "An Ideal Husband." The edition will include hitherto unpublished work, including "The Florentine Tragedy," a short poetic tragedy, and the passages of "De Profundis" hitherto only included in the German version. The same firm has in preparation a volume of essays by Mr. Hilaire Belloc, "On Nothing and Kindred Subjects," which will contain anything he has done, and he has already done some very good things.

THE BOOK WORLD.

This day week will appear the first six volumes of Messrs. Methuen's uniform edition of the works of the late Oscar Wilde, and the remaining volumes (seven or eight in number) will appear together some time next month. The first batch consists of "The Duchess of Padua" (never before published in book form), "Salome, and Other Plays," "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "An Ideal Husband." Many of these, of course, have been out of print for some years, and much material gathered into the later volumes has never been identified as Wilde's except by his own memoranda, the albums of his friends, and the recollection of various editors in whose periodicals it appeared. Among these fugitive things there is an important series of a hundred articles that Wilde contributed to the "Pall Mall Gazette," ranging from reviews and "specials" to those front-page articles which are known in the office by the esoteric name of "followers," because they follow the "leader."

One of these followers is an account that Wilde was commissioned to write of Whistler's "Ten o'clock" lecture, and Wilde's record of that curious monologue was a landmark in the quarrel that lasted between the two wits for so many years. By the way, speaking of Wilde and the "Pall Mall Gazette," we are reminded of an occasion in which the aesthete figured as one of a very distinguished list of guests on a very odd occasion. Those were the days when Mr. Stuart Cumberland was about to stagger humanity with his marvellous powers as a thought-reader, and he was invited to give a demonstration to which a number of famous contributors were invited, Wilde among the rest. The test was to hit upon the exact thought of any given person, and if possible to trace the object he had in mind. The late Grant Allen, who was a pretty frequent visitor and contributor, was deputed to set the test, and he hit upon a shrewd idea which led to a most interesting chase. There has never probably been such a curious hunt through London streets since a fox broke through a hanging procession on the way to Tyburn and escaped into the verdant groves of Paddington.

In the early days of the paper, the late James Greenwood had made himself a name as "The Amateur Casual," and to illustrate to his colleagues the reality of the experiences he so vividly described in print he brought back a sample of London workhouse bread. It was put under a glass case and kept among the office curiosities until it acquired an aspect as of a Pompeian relic. People "in the know," you may say, came miles to see it, and bounce its flinty substance on the office floor. It was kept, not at the "Pall Mall Gazette" office in Northumberland-street, but at a branch office, loftily known as the Art Department, somewhere at the back of the block, with an address in Craven-street. This was the thought-reader's unknown destination. Accepting the bandage across his eyes, and taking Grant Allen by the wrist, Mr. Cumberland led the way slowly into the street, with a cohort of celebrities in his wake. The curious procession straggled down the street, and round the tiny alley to the left until some of the witnesses must have thought they were bound for a grimy expedition through the arches that represent the old Adelphi caverns which were the haunt of little David Copperfield. The man with the bandage turned, however, and in a couple of minutes he had won. There were other tests, but this one, which is immortalised, by another hand than Wilde's, in our office file.

Western Daily Press.

Feb. 7.

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Daily Mail.

Feb. 8. 1908

Messrs. Methuen will publish next week the first six volumes of a uniform edition of the works of Owen W. The edition will contain fourteen volumes in all.

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Morning Leader.

Feb. 8.

The first six volumes of Messrs. Methuen's uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's works will be published on 13 Feb. In addition to "The Duchess of Padua," a hitherto unpublished play, the titles are "Salome and Other Plays," "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "An Ideal Husband." The edition is limited to 1,000 copies on hand-made paper, and there are 80 copies on Japanese vellum.

Jis2019/03/18 University Library

Tatler.

February 19. 1908

Ambassador and Financier.

Being a close friend of the King's the Marquis de Soveral is naturally somewhat intimate with Sir Ernest Cassel, the eminent financier, and incidentally his Majesty's confidential adviser upon his financial affairs. The two met at Marienbad a year or two ago when a play of the late Oscar Wilde was being performed there. "I say, Soveral," said Sir Ernest, "have you seen *The Importance of Being Earnest*?" "No," replied "Blue Monkey" with a meaning smile, "but I have often seen the importance of being Ernest—Cassel."

97 **Le Gallienne** (Richard) THE BOOK BILLS
OF NARCISSUS, an account rendered by Richard
Le Gallienne, SECOND EDITION, post 8vo, *cloth*,
bevelled edges, top edges gilt, AS NEW, 1s6d (pub
4s6d net) 1892 10

The most famous book bill of Mr. Le Gallienne was surely that for the *Ency. Britannica*, which he bought only for Mr. Watts-Dunton's article on Poetry. (See Douglas on T. Watts-Dunton, p. 1.)

But his Narcissus was a good buyer too, and a good admirer. "He had pre-eminently that capacity which most fine men have of falling in love with themselves." "The Narcissus of the modern legend were not more a dweller in Nirvana" (p. 84).

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Pall Mall Gazette,

February
7.1908

INDISCRIMINATE.*

This book on Mr. Wilde is quite harmless; but, we fear, also quite useless. It is not tainted with the half-silly, quite unpleasant sort of hero-worship which is now somewhat prevalent; it is a study of Wilde's works, and of his literary position. Unfortunately Mr. Ingleby shows no signs of any special ability for literary criticism, or for the study of Wilde in particular. His book is written with a high seriousness that would make the subject of it, we fancy, smile considerably; and when we come to pages on pages of prose paraphrase of "The Sphinx," we can scarcely restrain from smiles ourselves. The book is, in fact, a kind of Baedeker to Wilde's works; and to apply anything so gross and practical as a German guide book to that author's dainty and evanescent fancies is to court disaster. Those familiar with "The Sphinx" will understand what we mean from such a sentence as that of Mr. Ingleby's, "Wilde catalogues through the whole Egyptian mythology; he is inclined to give first place to Ammon." We are sorry not to be able to say anything more favourable of this book; as we were heartily glad to discover it is an attempt to discuss Wilde's literary position, and that it shuns, as far as possible, peering into the miseries of his life. It may do good if it sends some few more readers to the exquisite fairy-stories, surely the best since Andersen's; or compels the critics to reconsider the true character of that singular *tour de force*, Dorian Gray.

2019-03-18 Bissen Women's University Library 135

* "Oscar Wilde." By L. C. Ingleby. (London: T. Werner Laurie.) 12s. 6d. net.

Much disappointment will be caused in musical circles by the announcement that the proposed concert performance of excerpts from Strauss's "Salome" has had to be abandoned—

Glasgow Herald. Feb 27.

A MID-VICTORIAN PEEP-SHOW.

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This book, the frankness and occasional indiscreetness of whose anecdotes and comments are bound to secure for it a certain not unmerited notoriety, is by an artist's daughter, who was born in 1848.

Oscar Wilde the author met with in London, when he was at the height of his fame, and disliked him. "The last time I saw him was in France; he was standing in a little wood by a bicycle, and as I came by his hand went up to his hat. I did not appear to know him."

Sunday Sun Feb. 9, 1908

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OSCAR WILDE. By Leonard Cresswell Ingleby. (London: T. Werner Laurie. 12s. 6d. net.)

Five years ago, says the author, such a book as this would probably have been out of place. Now, in a literary sense, as a man of letters with extraordinary genius, Oscar Wilde has come into his own; the time is therefore ripe for a work of the present character which endeavors to "appreciate" one of the strangest, saddest, most artistic and powerful brains of modern times.

This is the keynote of Mr. Ingleby's book. But the methods adopted by the author to set a value upon the literary work of Oscar Wilde can scarcely be described as adequate, and must in the minds of those who, naturally enough, cannot entirely separate the man from his work, have rather the contrary effect to that doubtless desired by the author.

Long, diffuse quotations from newspapers and magazines are scarcely a satisfactory way of "appreciating" an author, and these are a feature of the book.

About Oscar Wilde the man it is well to draw a veil. It will be easier to form a saner judgment of the unhappy writer when time shall have done its work. The picture presented by Mr. Ingleby can scarcely be expected to aid in reconciling public opinion with the affront of Oscar Wilde's life, and his work must stand or fall on its merits.

Oscar Wilde was a wondrous artist in words. The undoubted beauty of much of his literary work cannot be denied, but their appeal is more to the senses than to the mind. Wilde's art, however, in many cases, seems to have been rather assimilative than creative.

And the effect of his literary environment on his work is seen with startling vividness in "De Profundis." With his reading practically limited to the Bible his ideas and his style are nothing but echoes of that reading, if an opinion may be based on the passages cited by his historian.

In fact, if Oscar Wilde be judged by the "appreciation" of him presented by the author, he would appear to be a writer who readily assimilated whatever of sensuousness he met in life, art or literature and unblushingly and blatantly thrust it forward into notice.

There is, however, much to be learned about Oscar Wilde and his writings in these pages, and perhaps busy men and those who desire to acquire some knowledge of his literary productions without much effort will be pleased with the book. In any case it is likely to turn the attention of many who have neglected the writings of its subject to what is published of them and it would be unjust to say that they do not merit consideration.

Glasgow News. Feb. 10

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Post & Mercury

Liverpool. Feb. 12, 1908

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Morning Post, Feb. 13.

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The first volume of a sumptuous edition of Wilde's works. This play is now published for the first time, the present edition being based upon the author's corrected copy.

Times. Feb. 13, 1908

DRAMA.

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA. By OSCAR WILDE. 8 1/2 x 6, 210 pp. Methuen. 12s. 6d.

[The first volume in Messrs. Methuen's uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's works. The Duchess of Padua, produced in New York in 1891, has not hitherto been published. The original MS. was stolen from the author's house in 1895; two prompt copies exist, and the present edition is based on one, containing the author's corrections. The period of the play is the latter half of the 16th century.]

FEB. 22, 1908

THE ATHENÆUM

MESSRS. METHUEN'S NEW

Please write at once to Messrs. METHUEN for their LIST of NEW BOOKS. It is well illustrated a LIST of NEW NOVELS.

THE WORKS OF OSCAR WILDE

Messrs. METHUEN have much pleasure in announcing that they began, on February 13, the publication, in Twelve Volumes, of the uniform edition of the works of OSCAR WILDE. The books are reprinted from the latest editions issued under the superintendence of the Author, and in many cases they contain the latest editions issued under the superintendence of the author, and in many cases they contain his last corrections. They are published by the authority of his literary executor.

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A long play hitherto unpublished.

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LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN, A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE, AN IDEAL HUSBAND, THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST.

MR. HEINEMANN

publish NEXT VOLUME and political interest

MEMOIR

EIGHT PAGES

By HENRY

With Portrait. I've speaking at Epsom on said—"On anything related constant and so close observation as to its many aspects."

MEMOIR

Nottingham Guardian, Feb. 11

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Globe. Feb. 12, 1908.

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a new Play, and the other books have been out of print for some years, and are now practically unobtainable.

The edition is limited to 1,000 copies for Great Britain and America, and is printed on hand-made paper, demy 8vo. The price of each volume is 12s. 6d. net. There is also an edition, limited to 50 copies for Great Britain and America, on Japanese vellum, 42s. net each volume. The whole Edition will be soon sold.

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FEB. 22, 1908

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2019-03-18

Jissen Women's University Library

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Glasgow Herald.

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Fruit

Oscar Wilde the author met with in London, when he was at the height of his fame, and disliked him. "The last time I saw him was in France; he was standing in a little wood by a bicycle, and as I came by his hand went up to his hat. I did not appear to know him." Apparently the author saw nothing inhuman or un-Christian in snubbing a man whose face seemed to her "that of a lost soul gazing through the gates of paradise. He smiled, or at least bowed; but the mid-Victorian matron is a little higher than the angels."

Sunday Sun Feb. 9, 1908**Dramas in Book Form.**

Messrs. Methuen will in a day or two publish the first six volumes of the uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's works, edited by Mr. Robert Ross. They will be "The Duchess of Padua," "Salome and Other Plays," "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "An Ideal Husband." "The Duchess of Padua" is a new play—a blank-verse tragedy in five acts, of which, so far, there has only been a pirated prose edition in America. There will be a good deal of hitherto unpublished work by Wilde in this uniform edition, as, for instance, "The Florentine Tragedy," a short, poetic tragedy. The volume containing Wilde's remarkable essay and study, "De Profundis," has been augmented by the passages which have hitherto only appeared in the German. The same volume will contain four letters written by Wilde, from Reading, to his literary executor, and two letters on prison reform which he addressed to the "Daily Chronicle." Several new poems and essays, with fragments of a lost play, will be given in a volume of miscellanies. The copyrights of Wilde's works are variously held, but by arrangement everything will appear in the present edition including "Dorian Gray," for which Mr. Ross has secured the necessary rights.

OSCAR WILDE. By Leonard Cresswell Ingleby.
(London: T. Werner Laurie. 12s. 6d. net.)

Five years ago, says the author, such a book as this would probably have been out of place. Now, in a literary sense, as a man of letters with extraordinary genius, Oscar Wilde has come into his own; the time is therefore ripe for a work of the present character which endeavors to "appreciate" one of the strangest, saddest, most artistic and powerful brains of modern times.

This is the keynote of Mr. Ingleby's book. But the methods adopted by the author to set a value upon the literary work of Oscar Wilde can scarcely be described as adequate, and must in the minds of those who, naturally enough, cannot entirely separate the man from his work, have rather the contrary effect to that doubtless desired by the author.

Long, diffuse quotations from newspapers and magazines are scarcely a satisfactory way of "appreciating" an author, and these are a feature of the book.

About Oscar Wilde the man it is well to draw a veil. It will be easier to form a saner judgment of the unhappy writer when time shall have done its work. The picture presented by Mr. Ingleby can scarcely be expected to aid in reconciling public opinion with the affront of Oscar Wilde's life, and his work must stand or fall on its merits. The world may be taken by storm by the energetic effort of an author; to retain the conquered place depends on the intrinsic value of the work.

Oscar Wilde was a wondrous artist in words. The undoubted beauty of much of his literary work cannot be denied, but their appeal is more to the senses than to the mind. Wilde's art, however, in many cases, seems to have been rather assimilative than creative. The beauties of his poetry as pointed out by Mr. Ingleby seem strangely reminiscent of

other writers in vogue at his time. And the effect of his literary environment on his work is seen with startling vividness in "De Profundis." With his reading practically limited to the Bible his ideas and his style are nothing but echoes of that reading; if an opinion may be based on the passages cited by his historian.

In fact, if Oscar Wilde be judged by the "appreciation" of him presented by the author, he would appear to be a writer who readily assimilated whatever of sensuousness he met in life, art or literature and unblushingly and blatantly thrust it forward into notice. One is surfeited with luscious images and is forced to yearn for the concise adequacy of classic writers.

There is, however, much to be learned about Oscar Wilde and his writings in these pages, and perhaps busy men and those who desire to acquire some knowledge of his literary productions without much effort will be pleased with the book. In any case it is likely to turn the attention of many who have neglected the writings of its subject to what is published of them and it would be unjust to say that they do not merit consideration.

Glasgow News.

Feb. 10.

On the 13th Messrs Methuen will publish the first six volumes of the uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's works, edited by Mr Robert Ross. They will be "The Duchess of Padua," "Salome and Other Plays," "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "An Ideal Husband." "The Duchess of Padua" is a new play—a blank-verse tragedy in five acts, of which, so far, there has only been a pirated prose version in America. There will be a good deal of hitherto unpublished work by Wilde in this uniform edition, as, for instance, "The Florentine Tragedy," a short, poetic tragedy. The volume containing Wilde's remarkable essay and study, "De Profundis," has been augmented by the passages which have hitherto only appeared in German. The same volume will contain four letters written by Wilde, from Reading, to his literary executor, and two letters on prison reform which he addressed to the "Daily Chronicle." Several new poems and essays with fragments of a lost play will be given in a volume of miscellanies. The copyrights of Wilde's works are variously held, but by arrangement everything will appear in the present edition, including for which, Mr Ross has written a prefatory note.

Post & Mercury

Liverpool.

Feb. 12. 1908

The first six volumes of Messrs Methuen's uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's works will be published tomorrow. In addition to "The Duchess of Padua," a hitherto unpublished play, the titles are "Salomé and Other Plays," "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "An Ideal Husband."

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Morning Post,

Feb. 13.

“The Duchess of Padua: a Play.” By Oscar Wilde. Methuen and Co. 12s. 6d. net.

The first volume of a sumptuous edition of Wilde's works. This play is now published for the first time, the present edition being based upon the author's corrected copy.

1940
Jisc 1940
Women's University Library

Times.

Feb. 13. 1908

DRAMA.

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA. By OSCAR WILDE. 8½×6, 210 pp.
Methuen. 12s. 6d.

[The first volume in Messrs. Methuen's uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's works. *The Duchess of Padua*, produced in New York in 1891, has not hitherto been published. The original MS. was stolen from the author's house in 1897; the prompt copies exist, and the present edition is based on one, containing the author's corrections. The period of the play is the latter half of the 16th century.]

2019 issue 18 Women's University Library 145

Nottingham Guardian, Feb. 11.

On Thursday Messrs. Methuen will publish the first six volumes of the uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's works, edited by Mr. Robert Ross. They will be "The Duchess of Padua," "Salome and Other Plays," "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "An Ideal Husband." "The Duchess of Padua" is a new play—a blank-verse tragedy in five acts, of which, so far, there has only been a pirated prose version in America. There will be a good deal of hitherto unpublished work by Wilde in this uniform edition, as, for instance, "The Florentine Tragedy," a short, poetic tragedy. The volume containing Wilde's remarkable essay and study, "De Profundis," has been augmented by the passages which have hitherto only appeared in the German.

Globe.

Feb. 12. 1908.

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

"Culture is half way to heaven."--GEORGE MEREDITH.

Please write at once to Messrs. METHUEN for their list of New Books. It is well illustrated and very interesting. Send also for their list of New Novels.

The WORKS of OSCAR WILDE.

Messrs. METHUEN have much pleasure in announcing that they commence, on February 13, the publication, in 12 Volumes, of a uniform edition of the works of OSCAR WILDE. The books are reprinted from the latest editions issued under the superintendence of the author, and in many cases they contain his last corrections. They are published by the authority of his literary executor.

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA is

a new Play, and the other books have been out of print for some years, and are now practically unobtainable.

The edition is limited to 1,000 copies for Great Britain and America, and is printed on hand-made paper, demy 8vo. The price of each volume is 12s. 6d. net. There is also an edition, limited to 80 copies for Great Britain and America, on Japanese vellum, 42s. net each volume. The whole Edition will be soon sold.

The first six volumes are:

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA.

A long play hitherto unpublished.

SALOME, and OTHER PLAYS.

This volume includes a lately discovered play, "A Florentine Tragedy," and "Vera," an early work. "Salome" is in the original French.

LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN.

A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE.

AN IDEAL HUSBAND.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST.

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THE DUCHESS OF PADUA.

A long play hitherto unpublished.

SALOME, AND OTHER PLAYS.

This volume includes a lately discovered play, 'A Florentine Tragedy,' and 'Vera,' an early work. 'Salome' is in the original French.

LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN.

A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE.

AN IDEAL HUSBAND.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST.

A WILDE PLAY.

PUBLISHED TO-DAY.

"THE DUCHESS OF PADUA: A PLAY." By Oscar Wilde. London: Methuen and Co. 12s. 6d. net.

To-day is issued the first volume of a uniform edition of the works of Oscar Wilde, authorised and supervised by Mr. Robert Ross, his literary executor, and published by Messrs. Methuen and Company. The edition is such as the author would have approved, since it is admirably printed by Messrs. T. and A. Constable on hand-made paper, and is tastefully bound. In all there will be about fourteen volumes—"Dorian Gray" will not be included—and the books will be reprinted from the last editions which had the superintendence of the author, and in many cases will contain his final corrections. Of this uniform edition there will be only a thousand copies for the United Kingdom and the United States. In addition, eighty copies will be printed on Japanese vellum, and sold at two guineas net apiece. The initial volume consists of "The Duchess of Padua," which is described as "a new play," though one has an impression of having seen it in print before. It is hardly necessary to add that some of the other books have been out of print for years, and are now practically unobtainable, except in pirated and mutilated editions. The present play was begun in 1882, and finished in the following year, and was produced at the Hammerstein Opera House, New York, on the 14th of November, 1891. Twenty "prompt" books I in my visits to Manchester I have been "not as good at work as I was." "I may say I am going fast towards seventy, and have stuck on like grim death, have the benefit of looking up, could not the shareholders, who there are cases like my own. Now that the Canal ceath. Among the shareholders I have no doubt the money was got for them by the skin of the ship Canal on the 21st of September, 1887, and I bought twenty-five shares in the Manchester for the worst of a work veteran, not Army veteran? Sir—Will you kindly find space in your paper to the Editor of the "Manchester Courier."

THE MANCHESTER SHIP CANAL.

The Editor of the "Manchester Courier" will be glad to receive further donations at 22, Cannon-street. Collecting boxes may be had on application to the Hon. Secretary, the Rev. J. Wilcockson, Cemetery House, Hartington, Wellingdon Hotel, Hyde-road 0 0 5 Great Central Railway, London-road 0 0 7 Old Hall Moon, Major-street 0 1 2 Household Stores, King-street West 0 0 2 3/4 Roma-street 0 3 1/2 Victoria Hotel (Billiard room), Victoria-street 0 0 11/2 Grosvenor Hotel, Dean-street (smoke Refreshment Room, No. 14 0 0 5/2 Refreshment Room, No. 12 0 10 3 Refreshment Room, No. 4 0 0 9/2 Refreshment Room, No. 2 0 2 4 Lang & York, Railway (2nd door) 0 0 6 Douglas Hotel, Corporation-street 0 0 0 Swan With Two Necks, Wilby-grove 0 1 0

Feb. 13. 1908

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A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE.

AN IDEAL HUSBAND.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST.

POETRY.

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA. A Play by Oscar Wilde. 12s. 6d. net. London: Methuen & Co.

Oscar Wilde's "Duchess of Padua" (this handsomely appointed copy of which forms the first volume of the new uniform edition of his complete works) is not exactly a new play, for it was written more than twenty years ago; yet neither is this edition of it properly described as a new edition; for the work has not till now been properly published in book form. It has been played in America, and there were "prompt books" for use in the theatre. Recently, doubtless owing to the success of Salome in Strauss's musical setting, this play has been widely circulated in Germany in a translation by Dr Mat Meyerfeld; and prose versions into English from this German translation—unauthorised, as one learns from Mr Robert Ross' prefatory note to this volume—have been circulated both in this country and in America. It will accordingly prove a matter of congratulation among the many admirers of this writer's work that a regular edition of the play should have at last appeared. The piece itself is not at all like those by which its author won the freedom of the London stage—not, that is to say, a comedy of fashionable manners, intrigue, and polite epigram. It is a five-act tragedy in blank verse on the model of the gloomier Elizabethans, animated throughout by the feeling of the Italian Renaissance in its decadent days, and setting out, with a certain fresh ingenuity of invention, though always with reminiscences of Shakespeare's school, and with many felicities of poetic dialogue, a story of two guilty loves, whose passion brings about murders and their own tragical extinction at the end.

Scotsman.

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA, a Play, by Oscar Wilde, in the new uniform edition of his works. London, Methuen, 12s. 6d. net—published to-day.

By Edward Thomas.

The scene of this play, written by Oscar Wilde in 1882-3, and produced at New York in 1891, is Padua in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The chief persons are Guido Ferranti, a young man; Count Moranzone, an old man; Simone Gesso, the duke; and Beatrice, his wife. Guido, a foundling, has been asked to meet an unknown friend of his unknown father, in the market-place. Moranzone is the friend, and he tells the boy of his father's murder by a Malatesta, now dead, and his betrayal by another. Guido is to take serown, yet an age which, learnedly in history, frolearnedly and imaginatively in the arts, spends up its heat in keeping dead things warm while its own perish with cold. The very writing of this for play is not of our age. Its aims are those of bat men who wrote three hundred years ago, and job what is worse, it is derived from them, and is on as much out of the main current as Darley's Go or Beddoes's or Mr. Phillips's plays. Here are unnecessary, unreal fools, with jests on an Elizabethan model. Here are speeches du which only an actor, accustomed to unreality, fal could utter without looking down to see if it de was really earth or linoleum on which he de stood. In brief, the language is rhetoric, super-imposed upon some original and some striking for passionate thoughts. The rhetoric may have pi "all Arabia" in it, choicely managed, but that does not change its spots. Wilde perhaps felt this when he enclosed some parts in brackets. bu The long speeches look as if written by some Be prodigious schoolboy as an exercise in English du verse upon a set subject.

Phrase-Making.

Phrases like "I shall not die till I have uttered voice" are not even good rhetoric. On the other hand, there are some little passages, especially one in the trial scene, where Guido says: "Art thou that Beatrice, Duchess of Padua?" which are worth all the rhetoric if they can only be seen through it on the ou stage.

It may be said that sixteenth century Paduans talked so, or that a venerable convention allows it. But Wilde would not have at been content merely to add to the Elizabethan drama by speeches like that in which Beatrice asks for water to wash the word Revenge from her brow. He shows that clearly by several passages which, like the Duchess's "How differently do we love from men," &c., are purely of his own age. Then, again, when Guido relents and calls after Beatrice just ou before he is seized by the soldiers, and calls in vain: that is not Elizabethan. Nor is the Duke's Neronian humour; nor indeed the re-vulsions of feeling which turn both Guido and Beatrice again and again. Guido's false confession, and the poisoned Duchess's cry for water, are true to nature and nothing else. "Here in thine arms, kissing thy mouth; farewell," is of the "Yellow Book" age. There are also passages in the old style which transcend all but the greatest of their models. The whole is the work of an incomparable talent for verse and the theatre, which has pedantically fettered itself with the bonds of a supposed sixteenth century human nature, and in so doing has produced such a play as only the greatest of that age surpassed; its general charm being an archaeological perfection, with occasional subtle variations from the writer's own time. I say "talent," to express a sense of its inferiority to the power, which, also returning to the Renaissance, created "Monna Vanna."

THE 'PRENTICE HAND.'

[PUBLISHED TO-DAY.]

This play is chiefly of interest as showing from what beginnings Mr. Wilde's poetic genius developed. For curiously narrow and mannered as his poetry, on the whole, is, it did show signs of what we believe literary criticism can call genius. It is true he was never so happy to our thinking in verse as in prose. In prose he was almost original in style, while in all his verse the derivative element is strong. Of course, Oscar Wilde is the supreme example of latter days of what we call the Latin or Roman type of artist—the artist who invents scarcely anything; but borrows, and polishes and alters and at times improves. Just as "Salome" is after Maeterlinck; the "Poems" after Rossetti and Mr. Swinburne; the prose of the essays after Pater and Arnold; and just as the "Ballad of Reading Gaol" is frankly, in its style, after Coleridge and Hood, so "The Duchess of Padua" is the result of Oscar Wilde's reading of the Elizabethan dramatists, including Shakspeare. How closely it follows its great originals can be gauged from the fact that we have such a line as "I did not think he would have bled so much," and by readers of the book, from its use of prose and its curiously incompetent comic citizens. The play was written, Mr. Ross tells us, in 1882 and 1883, while the author was still a young man; and it is a very immature work. There is practically no attempt at characterisation; nor, indeed, was character-drawing ever Mr. Wilde's strong point: where he was consummate was in his treatment of ideas, not in his treatment of character. In "The Duchess of Padua" there is no consistency in the action of the Duchess, or of Guido Ferranti, her lover. Guido is perhaps the more impossible of the two. The other characters are merely pegs for speeches, some of which are beautiful in a rhetorical way. But there is no sign in the play that its author could write as he wrote in "The Sphinx," or in some of the lyrics and sonnets in his first book. In fact, we suppose the book is one more sign that maturity is nearly always—the name of Marlowe flames forth a conspicuous exception—necessary before a man can write a really sound play.

We should add that this volume is one of the collected and authorised edition of Mr. Wilde's works, which are sold only in sets. It is beautifully got up and the type is clear and large, though there are rather an annoying number of "blind" "i's" and maimed "f's." There should be no such faults in an edition limited to a thousand copies. Also we wish Mr. Ross had printed the cast of the drama as produced in America: such details always add to the value of a play in book form.

* "The Duchess of Padua." By Oscar Wilde. (London: Methuen.) 12s. 6d. net.

Evening Standard and St. James's

"We know that the love of books is the same thing as the love of wisdom."—RICHARD DE BURY.

THE WORKS OF OSCAR WILDE. Messrs.

METHUEN have much pleasure in announcing that they have begun the publication, in Twelve Volumes, of a Uniform Edition of the Works of OSCAR WILDE. The books are reprinted from the latest editions issued under the superintendence of the Author, and in many cases they contain his last corrections. They are published by the authority of his Literary Executor. A prospectus with full particulars will be sent on application. The binding is by C. Ricketta. The first six volumes are:

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA, a long play hitherto unpublished. SALOME, AND OTHER PLAYS. LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN. A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE. AN IDEAL HUSBAND. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST.

METHUEN and CO., 36, Essex-street, London, W.C.

PUBLISHED TO-DAY.

"THE DUCHESS OF PADUA: A PLAY." By Oscar Wilde. London: Methuen and Co. 12s. 6d. net.

To-day is issued the first volume of a uniform edition of the works of Oscar Wilde, authorised and supervised by Mr. Robert Ross, his literary executor, and published by Messrs. Methuen and Company. The edition is such as the author would have approved, since it is admirably printed by Messrs. T. and A. Constable on hand-made paper, and is tastefully bound. In all there will be about fourteen volumes—

"The Duchess of Padua," which is described as "a new play," though one has an impression of having seen it in print before. It is hardly necessary to add that some of the other books have been out of print for years, and are now practically unobtainable except in pirated and mutilated editions. The present play was begun in 1882, and finished in the following year, and was produced at the Hanmerston Opera House, New York, on the 14th of November, 1891. Twenty "prompt" copies were printed for private circulation and use in the theatre. One of the only two copies known to exist contains the author's corrections, and on this edition is based. Certain passages were found to be bracketed or deleted in pencil. "Whether these passages were omitted for stage representation, or were intended to be staged by the author altogether," says a prefatory note, "there is no evidence to show." In this volume they have been retained, and they are indicated by brackets. One is inclined to think that the intention must have been to delete them, because the play reads much better, as it must have acted much better, without them. The original manuscript was stolen, with other unpublished works, from the author's house in April, 1898. It cannot be said that the play is a good specimen of the author's work, and he was evidently conscious of its defects. Mr. Ross, in a dedication to "A. S.," writes:

A few months before his death Mr. Oscar Wilde expressed to me a regret that he had never dedicated any of his works to one from whom he had received such infinite kindness, and to whom he was under obligations no flatterer could repay. With no great sincerity, because I knew he was a dying man, I suggested he might still write a play or book which you would accept. He answered with truth: "There is nothing but the Duchess of Padua, and it is unworthy of her and unworthy of me." With all his egotism and self-complacency you will know, perhaps as well as I do, that he never regarded his work as adequate expression of his extraordinary genius and his magnificent intellectual endowment; many people hardly believe that in his last years he was the severest critic of his own achievements. In the pages of "De Profundis" there are many references to yourself, and I think I am carrying out my dear friend's wishes in asking your acceptance of a play, which was the prelude to a singularly brilliant and, if the last five years are omitted, a very happy life.

The scene is laid in Padua in the latter half of the sixteenth century, and much of the brilliancy of the place and time is reflected in its pages. It is carefully written, though it possesses few of the characteristics which afterwards distinguished the author's work. Some lines are exquisitely fashioned, as that depicting the love of two friends:

Which beats between us like a summer sea, or those containing the appeal—

If you do not love me, Say, none the less, you do, for on your tongue Faithfulness for very shame would turn to truth. There is power in the answer of Guido, who has refrained from murdering the Duke because of his love for the Duchess—to the self-proaches of the Duchess, who has committed the murder because of her love for Guido:

Who know what a thing temptation is, Let those who have not walked as we have done In the red fire of passion, those whose lives Are dull and colourless, in a word let those, If any such there be, who have not loved, Cast stones against you.

The curtain falls on the death of the lovers, who die by their own hands, and, though the result is inevitable and in accordance with the rules of art, yet one cannot but feel that the estimate of the author was accurate, and that the play is not worthy of him.

"Culture is half way to heaven."—GEORGE MEREDITH.

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LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN. A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE. AN IDEAL HUSBAND. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST.

POETRY. THE DUCHESS OF PADUA. A Play by Oscar Wilde. 12s. 6d. net. London: Methuen & Co.

Oscar Wilde's "Duchess of Padua" (this handsomely appointed copy of which forms the first volume of the new uniform edition of his complete works) is not exactly a new play, for it was written more than twenty years ago; yet neither is this edition of it properly described as a new edition, for the work has not till now been properly published in book form. It has been played in America, and there were "prompt books" for use in the theatre. Recently, doubtless owing to the success of Salome in Strauss's musical setting, this play has been widely circulated in Germany in a translation by Dr. Max Meyerfeld; and prose versions into English from this German translation—unauthorised, as one learns from Mr. Robert Ross' prefatory note to this volume—have been circulated both in this country and in America. It will accordingly prove a matter of congratulation among the many admirers of this writer's work that a regular edition of the play should have at last appeared. The piece itself is not at all like those by which its author won the freedom of the London stage—not, that is to say, a comedy of fashionable manners, intrigue, and polite epigram. It is a five-act tragedy in blank verse on the model of the gloomier Elizabethan plays, animated throughout by the feeling of the Italian Renaissance in its decadent days, and setting out, with a certain fresh ingenuity of invention, though always with reminiscences of Shakespeare's school, and with many felicities of poetic dialogue, a story of two guilty lovers, whose passion brings about murders and their own tragical extinction at the end.

Scotsman.

AN OSCAR WILDE PLAY.

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA. A Play by Oscar Wilde, in the new uniform edition of his works. London, Methuen, 12s. 6d. net. Published to-day.

The scene of this play, written by Oscar Wilde in 1882, and produced at New York in 1891, is Padua in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The chief persons are Guido Ferranti, a young man; Count Moranzono, an old man; Simone Gesso, the duke; and Beatrice, his wife. Guido, a foundling, has been taken in by his wife, and is now asked to meet an unknown friend of his in the market-place.

The Duke of Padua, a Malatesta, now dead, father's murder by a Malatesta, Guido is to take his revenge. He is betrayed by another, and then, at a sign service with his dearest companion. The betrayer is the duke, and that very day he joins his service, though itching to kill him. Just as he is about to do so, he hears God that punisheth all broken oaths—to hear him forsake all ties, all love of women—the duke leaves the cathedral and his dagger falls out of his hand as she looks back at him. Death and the Duke.

In the next act the Paduan crowd is roaring for the death of the cruel duke. The duchess, then, brings some of them into the palace and begs for an audience of the duke; but he will promise only a sermon on the Beauty of Obedience, and give a citizen two pence for crying "God save the duke." The duchess tells him that the poor man's rights, and they fall to discussing the duke's broken promises to his wife's friends. The duke reminds her that she stands alone. Guido starts, but restrains himself. The duke and his followers go out; Guido returns and falls at the feet of Beatrice. In the midst of their speeches of love for one another the duchess sees Moranzono in black; then a servant comes in with a package for Guido—the sign, a dagger; and Guido, unable to murder as well as love, tells Beatrice that he must go, "forth from between them, and he will kill her."

By moonlight he tells her of his love for her life and love. Alone she vows to kill herself; again she sees Moranzono, and asks him to give Guido back. His name, he says, is "Revenge." She does not understand. "I think I never harmed a little child," says Guido, who tells her of his love for her. But Guido is resolved not to let that man, who has killed the duke—she thought that but only to let his name know—who held him in his writing to let his name know. The wicked cannot power and slew him not. The wicked cannot love. On the staircase she feels his money justified, and in his joy he feels his money justified. But she has killed the duke—she thought that but she has killed the duke—she thought that she was the "barrier" between them. How could we sit together at love's table? asks Guido now. He takes her bloody knife and will not kiss her once; he sends her away, and she is only just before he is surrounded by soldiers, the duchess pointing him out.

At the Trial. The fourth act is the trial: Beatrice is sitting in a chair of state. A first Guido will not speak. Moranzono, threatening to tell the truth, forces him to claim to be heard. The duchess denies his right, and he is prevented. Then Guido tells his story of revenge and ends "I killed the duke." The duchess, calling out his name, faints. In the last act she goes in disguise to Guido's cell, where he is sleeping peacefully, beside him on the table the poison by which he is allowed to escape the headsman. She has come to take his place and let him go away in the dagger.

What if I drank these juices, and no ceased? Were it not better than to wait till Death Comes to my bed with all his serving men, Remorse, disease, old age, and misery? But so it must be. Why, why should I die? He will escape to-night, and so his blood Will not be on my head. No, I must die; I have been guilty, therefore I must die; He loves me not, and therefore I must die; I would die happier if he would kiss me. But he will not do that. I did not know him. I thought he meant to sell me to the judge: That is not strange; we women never know Our lovers till they leave us. . . . She takes the cup: O love, love, love, I did not think that I would pledge thee thus! She drinks, and Guido awakes. She tries to persuade him to take the disguise:

"What?" he cries, "am I fallen so low?" "That I may not have leave to die for you" She accuses herself, he himself. She will not let him kiss her murderous lips. The noise of the headsman and soldiers is heard outside, and he goes to take the poison. The play ends:

GUIDO: Who sin for love. DUCHESS: No, I have . . . ed, and yet perchance my sin will . . . forgiven me, I have loved much.

Gallant and Brilliant. It is a gallant, brilliant play, on Elizabethan, or, rather, Jacobean lines, a thing for Dekker and Ford and Tourneur to talk over with entry. The architecture, the furniture, the dresses, those tippets in violet, with long white wands, and the princely speeches of love like that of Launcelot and Guinevere, Tristan and Isolde, Paolo and Francesca, must make an impression on the stage which Oscar Wilde knew so much about. The first conversation between Guido and Beatrice is a brave matter which will last as long as the aristocratic antique love which it celebrates, love fed by delicate and cruel nurture in palace, on egoistic leisure and gay enterprise, with sport and war as its comers. The finest man, sages, finer than that, are of the same class. It is old-fashioned love to match magnificent clothes and ceremonies; it is incredible love, but it is love which poets have preserved for us, which we therefore bow down to, as if it was alive. Perhaps it was only possible for it to find what may seem its most fantastic expression in an age so remote from it as our own, yet an age which, learnedly in history, tearfully and imaginatively in the arts, spends its heat in keeping dead things warm while its own perish with cold. The very writing of this play is not of our age. Its aims are those of men who wrote three hundred years ago, and what is worse, it is derived from them, and is as much out of the main current as Darley's or Beddoe's or Mr. Phillips's plays. Here are unnecessary, unreal fools, with jests on an Elizabethan model. Here are speeches which only an actor, accustomed to unreality, could utter without looking down to see if it was really earth or linoleum on which he stood. In brief, the language is rhetoric, super-passionate thoughts. The rhetoric may have "all Arabia" in it, choicely managed, but that does not change its spots. Wilde perhaps felt this when he enclosed some parts in brackets. The long speeches look as if written by some prodigious schoolboy as an exercise in English verse upon a set subject.

Phrase-Making. Phrases like "I shall not die till I have uttered voice" are not even good rhetoric. On the other hand, there are some little passages, especially one in the trial scene, where Guido says: "Art thou that Beatrice, Duchess of Padua?" which are worth all the rhetoric if they can only be seen through it on the stage.

It may be said that sixteenth century Paduans talked so, or that a venerable convention allows it. But Wilde would not have been content merely to add to the Elizabethan drama by speeches like that in which Beatrice asks for water to wash the word Revenge from her brow. He shows that clearly by several passages which, like the Duchess's "How differently do we love from men," &c., are purely of his own age. Then, again, when Guido releases an eagle after Beatrice just before he is seized by the soldiers, and calls in vain: that is not Elizabethan. Nor is the Duke's Neronian humour; nor indeed the revulsions of feeling which turn both Guido and Beatrice again and again. Guido's false confession, and the poisoned Duchess's cry for water, are true to nature and nothing else. "Here in thine arms, kissing by mouth, farewell" is of the "Yellow Book" age. There are also passages in the old style which transcend all but the greatest of their models. The whole is the work of an incomparable talent for verse and the theatre, which has pedantically fettered itself with the bonds of a supposed sixteenth century human nature, and in so doing has produced such a play as only the greatest of that age surpassed; its general charm being an archaeological perfection, with occasional subtle variations from the writer's own time. It is "talent," to express a sense of its inferiority to the power, which, also returning to the Renaissance, created "Monna Vanna."

THE 'PRENTICE HAND.' [PUBLISHED TO-DAY.]

This play is chiefly of interest as showing from what beginnings Mr. Wilde's poetic genius developed. For curiously narrow and mannered as his poetry, on the whole, is, it did show signs of what we believe literary criticism can call genius. It is true he was never so happy to our thinking in verse as in prose. In prose he was almost original in style, while in all his verse the derivative element is strong. Of course, Oscar Wilde is the supreme example of latter days of what we call the Latin or Roman type of artist—the artist, who invents scarcely anything; but borrows, and polishes and alters, and at times improves. Just as "Salome" is after the essays after Pater and Arnold; and just as the "Ballad of Reading Gaol" is frankly, in its style, after Coleridge and Hood, so "The Duchess of Padua" is the result of Oscar Wilde's reading of the Elizabethan dramatists, including Shakespeare. How closely it follows its great originals can be gauged from the fact that we have such a line as "I did not think he would have bled so much," and by readers of the book, from not think he would have bled so much," and by readers of the book, from its use of prose and its curiously incompetent comic citizens. The play was written, Mr. Ross tells us, in 1882 and 1883, while the author was still a young man; and it is a very immature work. There is practically no attempt at characterisation; nor, indeed, was character-drawing ever Mr. Wilde's strong point: where he was consummate was in his treatment of ideas, not in his treatment of character. In "The Duchess of Padua," there is no consistency in the action of the Duchess, or of Guido Ferranti, her lover. Guido is perhaps the more impossible of the two. The other characters are merely pegs for speeches, some of which are beautiful in a rhetorical way. But there is no sign in the play that its author could write as he wrote in "The Sphinx," or in some of the lyrics and sonnets in his first book. In fact, we suppose the book is one more sign that a man who is nearly always—the name of Marlowe flames forth a conspicuous exception—necessary before a man can write a really sound play, is not a poet.

We should add that this volume is one of the collected and authorised edition of Mr. Wilde's works, which are sold only in sets. It is beautifully got up and the type is clear and large, though there are rather an annoying number of "blind" "i's" and "f's." There should be no such faults in an edition limited to a thousand copies. Also we wish Mr. Ross had printed the cast of the drama as produced in America: such details always add to the value of a play in book form.

"The Duchess of Padua." By Oscar Wilde. (London: Methuen.) 12s. 6d. net.

Evening Standard and St. James's Feb. 13, 1907

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A WILDE PLAY.

PUBLISHED TO-DAY.

"THE DUCHESS OF PADUA: A PLAY." By Oscar Wilde. London: Methuen and Co. 12s. 6d. net.

To-day is issued the first volume of a uniform edition of the works of Oscar Wilde, authorised and supervised by Mr. Robert Ross, his literary executor, and published by Messrs. Methuen and Company. The edition is such as the author would have approved, since it is admirably printed by Messrs. T. and A. Constable on hand-made paper, and is tastefully bound. In all there will be about fourteen volumes—"Dorian Gray" will not be included—and the books will be reprinted from the last editions which had the superintendence of the author, and in many cases will contain his final corrections. Of this uniform edition there will be only a thousand copies for the United Kingdom and the United States. In addition, eighty copies will be printed on Japanese vellum, and sold at two guineas net apiece. The initial volume consists of "The Duchess of Padua," which is described as "a new play," though one has an impression of having seen it in print before. It is hardly necessary to add that some of the other books have been out of print for years, and are now practically unobtainable except in pirated and mutilated editions. The present play was begun in 1882, and finished in the following year, and was produced at the Hammerstein Opera House, New York, on the 14th of November, 1891. Twenty "prompt" copies were printed for private circulation and use in the theatre. One of the only two copies known to exist contains the author's corrections, and on it this edition is based. Certain passages were found to be bracketed or deleted in pencil. "Whether these passages were omitted for stage representation, or were intended to be omitted by the author altogether," says a prefatory note, "there is no evidence to show." In this volume they have been retained, and they are indicated by brackets. One is inclined to think that the intention must have been to delete them, because the play reads much better, as it must have acted much better, without them. The original manuscript was stolen, with other unpublished works, from the author's house in April, 1895. It cannot be said that the play is a good specimen of the author's work, and he was evidently conscious of its defects. Mr. Ross, in a dedication to "A. S.," writes:

A few months before his death Mr. Oscar Wilde expressed to me a regret that he had never dedicated any of his works to one from whom he had received such infinite kindness, and to whom he was under obligations no flattering dedication could repay. With no great sincerity, because I knew he was a dying man, I suggested he might still write a play or book which you would accept. He answered with truth "There is nothing but 'The Duchess of Padua,' and it is unworthy of her and unworthy of me." With all his egotism and self-complacency you will know, perhaps as well as I do, that he never regarded his work as an adequate expression of his extraordinary genius and his magnificent intellectual endowment; many people hardly believe that in his last years he was the severest critic of his own achievements. In the pages of "De Profundis" there are many references to yourself, and I think I am carrying out my dear friend's wishes in asking your acceptance of a play, which was the prelude to a singularly brilliant and, if the last five years are omitted, a very happy life.

The scene is laid in Padua in the latter half of the Sixteenth Century, and much of the brilliance of the place and time is reflected in its pages. It is carefully written, though it possesses few of the characteristics which afterwards distinguished the author's work. Some lines are exquisitely fashioned, as that depicting the love of two friends,

*Which beats between us like a summer sea,
or those containing the appeal—*

*If you do not love me,
Say, none the less, you do, for on your tongue
Falsehood for very shame would turn to truth.*

There is power in the answer of Guido, who has refrained from murdering the Duke because of his love for the Duchess, to the self-reproaches of the Duchess, who has committed the murder because of her love for Guido:

*Guilty? Let those
Who know what a thing temptation is,
Let those who have not walked as we have done
In the red fire of passion, those whose lives
Are dull and colourless, in a word let those,
If any such there be, who have not loved
Cast stones against you.*

The curtain falls on the death of the lovers, who die by their own hands, and, though the result is inevitable and in accordance with the rules of art, yet one cannot but feel that the estimate of the play is somewhat inaccurate, and that the play is not worthy of him.

February 13 1908

Westminster Gazette.

Feb. 13.

"Culture is half way to heaven."—GEORGE MERIDITH.

Please write at once to Messrs. METHUEN for their list of New Books. It is well illustrated and very interesting. Send also for their list of New Novels.

THE WORKS OF OSCAR WILDE. Messrs.

METHUEN have much pleasure in announcing that they commence, on February 13, the publication, in 12 Volumes, of a uniform edition of the works of OSCAR WILDE. The books are reprinted from the latest editions issued under the superintendence of the author, and in many cases they contain his last corrections. They are published by the authority of his literary executor. THE DUCHESS OF PADUA is a new Play, and the other books have been out of print for some years, and are now practically unobtainable.

The edition is limited to 1,000 copies for Great Britain and America, and is printed on hand-made paper, demy 8vo. The price of each volume is 12s. 6d. net. There is also an edition, limited to 80 copies for Great Britain and America, on Japanese vellum, 42s. net each volume. The whole Edition will be soon sold.

The first six volumes are :

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA.

A long play hitherto unpublished.

SALOME, AND OTHER PLAYS.

This volume includes a lately discovered play, "A Florentine Tragedy," and "Vera," an early work. "Salome" is in the original French.

LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN.

A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE.

AN IDEAL HUSBAND.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST.

POETRY.

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA. A Play by Oscar Wilde. 12s. 6d. net. London: Methuen & Co.

Oscar Wilde's "Duchess of Padua" (this handsomely appointed copy of which forms the first volume of the new uniform edition of his complete works) is not exactly a new play, for it was written more than twenty years ago; yet neither is this edition of it properly described as a new edition; for the work has not till now been properly published in book form. It has been played in America, and there were "prompt books" for use in the theatre. Recently, doubtless owing to the success of *Salome* in Strauss's musical setting, this play has been widely circulated in Germany in a translation by Dr Mat Meyerfeld; and prose versions into English from this German translation—unauthorised, as one learns from Mr Robert Ross' prefatory note to this volume—have been circulated both in this country and in America. It will accordingly prove a matter of congratulation among the many admirers of this writer's work that a regular edition of the play should have at last appeared. The piece itself is not at all like those by which its author won the freedom of the London stage—not, that is to say, a comedy of fashionable manners, intrigue, and polite epigram. It is a five-act tragedy in blank verse on the model of the gloomier Elizabethans, animated throughout by the feeling of the Italian Renaissance in its decadent days, and setting out, with a certain fresh ingenuity of invention, though always with reminiscences of Shakespeare's school, and with many felicities of poetic dialogue, a story of two guilty lovers, whose passion brings about murders and their own tragical extinction at the end.

Scotsman.

Daily Chronicle.

AN OSCAR WILDE PLAY.

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA, a Play, by Oscar Wilde, in the new uniform edition of his works. London, Methuen, 12s. 6d. net—published to-day.

By Edward Thomas.

The scene of this play, written by Oscar Wilde in 1882-3, and produced at New York in 1891, is Padua in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The chief persons are Guido Ferranti, a young man; Count Moranzone, an old man; Simone Gesso, the duke; and Beatrice, his wife. Guido, a foundling, has been asked to meet an unknown friend of his unknown father, in the market-place. Moranzone is the friend, and he tells the boy of his father's murder by a Malatesta, now dead, and his betrayal by another. Guido is to take service with the betrayer, and then, at a sign from Moranzone, murder him. He must give up everything for this end: he consents to part for ever with his dearest companion. The betrayer is the duke, and that very day he joins his service, though itching to kill him at once. Just as he is calling on the "terrible God that punisheth all broken oaths" to hear him forswear all ties, all love of women—the duchess leaves the cathedral and his dagger falls out of his hand as she looks back at him.

Death and the Duke.

In the next act a Paduan crowd is roaring for the death of the cruel duke. The duchess, pitying them, brings some of them into the palace and begs for an audience of the duke; but he will promise only a sermon on the Beauty of Obedience, and give a citizen two ducats for crying "God save the duke." The duchess tells him that the poor have rights, and they fall to discussing the duke's broken promises to his wife's father. The duke reminds her that she stands alone. Guido starts, but restrains himself. The duke and his followers go out; Guido returns and falls at the feet of Beatrice. In the midst of their speeches of love for one another the duchess sees Moranzone in black; then a servant comes in with a package for Guido—the sign, a dagger; and Guido, unable to murder as well as love, tells Beatrice that there is now a barrier between them, and he must go "forth from her life and love." Alone, she vows to kill herself; again she sees Moranzone, and asks him to give Guido back. His name, he says, is "Revenge." She does not understand:—"I think I never harmed a little child."

By moonlight Guido enters the palace, and Moranzone tells him that horses for Parma await him, and he may yet be lord of that city. But Guido is "resolved not to kill that man," but only to lay the dagger on his breast with writing to let him know "who held him in his power and slew him not." The wicked cannot love. On the staircase he meets Beatrice, and in his joy he feels his mercy justified. But she has killed the duke—she thought that he was the "barrier" between them. "How could we sit together at love's table?" asks Guido now. He takes her bloody knife and will not kiss her once; he sends her away, and relents only just before he is surrounded by soldiers, the duchess pointing him out.

At the Trial.

The fourth act is the trial: Beatrice is sitting in a chair of state. At first Guido will not speak. Moranzone, threatening to tell the truth, forces him to claim to be heard. The duchess denies his right, and hearing that the law allows it, tries to escape, but is prevented. Then Guido tells his story of revenge and ends "I killed the duke." The duchess, calling out his name, faints. In the last act she goes in disguise to Guido's cell, where he is sleeping peacefully, beside him on the table the poison by which he is allowed to escape the headsman. She has come to take his place and let him go away in the disguise:

What if I drank these juices, and so ceased?
Were it not better than to wait till Death
Come to my bed with all his serving men,
Remorse, disease, old age, and misery?
I wonder does one suffer much: I think
That I am very young to die like this.
But so it must be. Why, why should I die?
He will escape to-night, and so his blood
Will not be on my head. No, I must die;
I have been guilty, therefore I must die;
He loves me not, and therefore I must die:
I would die happier if he would kiss me.
But he will not do that. I did not know him.
I thought he meant to sell me to the judge;
That is not strange; we women never know
Our lovers till they leave us. . . .

She takes the cup:

O love, love, love,
I did not think that I would pledge thee thus!

She drinks, and Guido awakes. She tries to persuade him to take the disguise:

"What!" he cries, "am I fallen so low
That I may not have leave to die for you?"

She accuses herself, he himself. She will not let him kiss her murderous lips. The noise of the headsman and soldiers is heard outside, and he goes to take the poison. The play ends:

GUIDO: They do not sin at all
Who sin for love.

DUCHESS: No, I have . . . ed, and yet
Perchance my sin will . . . forgiven me,
I have loved much.

Gallant and Brilliant.

It is a gallant, brilliant play, on Elizabethan, or, rather, Jacobean lines, a thing for Dekker and Ford and Tourneur to talk over and envy. The architecture, the furniture, the dresses, those tipstuffs in violet, with long white wands, and the princely speeches of love like that of Launcelot and Guenevere, Tristram and Isoud, Paolo and Francesca, must make an incomparable scene on the stage which Oscar Wilde knew so much about. The first conversation between Guido and Beatrice is a brave matter which will last as long as the aristocratic antique love which it celebrates, love fed by delicate and cruel nurture in palaces, on egoistic leisure and gay enterprise, with sport and war as its compeers. The finest passages, finer than that, are of the same class. It is old-fashioned love to match magnificent clothes and ceremonies; it is incredible love, but it is love which poets have preserved for us, which we therefore bow down to, as if it was alive. Perhaps it was only possible for it to find what may seem its most fantastic expression in an age so remote from it as our own, yet an age which, learnedly in history, learnedly and imaginatively in the arts, spends its heat in keeping dead things warm while its own perish with cold. The very writing of this play is not of our age. Its aims are those of men who wrote three hundred years ago, and what is worse, it is derived from them, and is as much out of the main current as Darley's or Beddoes's or Mr. Phillips's plays. Here are unnecessary, unreal fools, with jests on an Elizabethan model. Here are speeches which only an actor, accustomed to unreality, could utter without looking down to see if it was really earth or linoleum on which he stood. In brief, the language is rhetoric, superimposed upon some original and some striking passionate thoughts. The rhetoric may have "all Arabia" in it, choicely managed, but that does not change its spots. Wilde perhaps felt this when he enclosed some parts in brackets. The long speeches look as if written by some prodigious schoolboy as an exercise in English verse upon a set subject.

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It may be said that sixteenth century Paduans talked so, or that a venerable convention allows it. But Wilde would not have been content merely to add to the Elizabethan drama by speeches like that in which Beatrice asks for water to wash the word Revenge from her brow. He shows that clearly by several passages which, like the Duchess's "How differently do we love from men," &c., are purely of his own age. Then, again, when Guido relents and calls after Beatrice just before he is seized by the soldiers, and calls in vain: that is not Elizabethan. Nor is the Duke's Neronian humour; nor indeed the revulsions of feeling which turn both Guido and Beatrice again and again. Guido's false confession, and the poisoned Duchess's cry for water, are true to nature and nothing else. "Here in thine arms, kissing thy mouth; farewell," is of the "Yellow Book" age. There are also passages in the old style which transcend all but the greatest of their models. The whole is the work of an incomparable talent for verse and the theatre, which has pedantically fettered itself with the bonds of a supposed sixteenth century human nature, and in so doing has produced such a play as only the greatest of that age surpassed; its general charm being an archaeological perfection, with occasional subtle variations from the writer's own time. I say "talent," to express a sense of its individuality, and also returning to the Renaissance, created "Monna Vanna."

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[PUBLISHED TO-DAY.]

This play is chiefly of interest as showing from what beginnings Mr. Wilde's poetic genius developed. For curiously narrow and mannered as his poetry, on the whole, is, it did show signs of what we believe literary criticism can call genius. It is true he was never so happy to our thinking in verse as in prose. In prose he was almost original in style, while in all his verse the derivative element is strong. Of course, Oscar Wilde is the supreme example of latter days of what we call the Latin or Roman type of artist—the artist who invents scarcely anything; but borrows, and polishes and alters and at times improves. Just as "Salome" is after Maeterlinck; the "Poems" after Rossetti and Mr. Swinburne; the prose of the essays after Pater and Arnold; and just as the "Ballad of Reading Gaol" is frankly, in its style, after Coleridge and Hood, so "The Duchess of Padua" is the result of Oscar Wilde's reading of the Elizabethan dramatists, including Shakspeare. How closely it follows its great originals can be gauged from the fact that we have such a line as "I did not think he would have bled so much," and by readers of the book, from its use of prose and its curiously incompetent comic citizens. The play was written, Mr. Ross tells us, in 1882 and 1883, while the author was still a young man; and it is a very immature work. There is practically no attempt at characterisation; nor, indeed, was character-drawing ever Mr. Wilde's strong point: where he was consummate was in his treatment of ideas, not in his treatment of character. In "The Duchess of Padua" there is no consistency in the action of the Duchess, or of Guido Ferranti, her lover. Guido is perhaps the more impossible of the two. The other characters are merely pegs for speeches, some of which are beautiful in a rhetorical way. But there is no sign in the play that its author could write as he wrote in "The Sphinx," or in some of the lyrics and sonnets in his first book. In fact, we suppose the book is one more sign that maturity is nearly always—the name of Marlowe flames forth a conspicuous exception—necessary before a man can write a really sound play.

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Evening Standard and St. James's

Feb.
26.

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OSCAR WILDE'S FIRST PLAY.

(By R. A. Scott-James.)

"The Duchess of Padua." A Play by Oscar Wilde. Methuen. 12s. 6d. net.

It is a strange thing, at this date, coming upon a complete and hitherto unpublished work, written a quarter of a century ago, by a renowned author who has now for some years been dead.

Even in this first play there is something ghoulish and uncanny in the author's use of his tools.

Love and Revenge. Young Guido seeks the man who is to tell him who his father is, and the dark figure of Moranzone stalks upon the stage.

Revenge. I think I never harmed a little child. What should Revenge do coming to my door?

For I shall lie within thine arms to-night. After thus portraying such disloyalty to Love for the sake of Revenge, no artist but Oscar Wilde could have made his hero stay from revenge in the name of love.

How fantastic, how impossible, yet how brilliantly composed it all is. There are innumerable untrue images and metaphors, there are many halting lines, there are situations kept up too long; yet with his ringing dialectic, his fierce assertions of feeling, his appeal to the spirit of licence, his riotous declamation, the author electrifies and keeps us spell-bound.

Will break upon this house before a storm morning. So horrible, that the white moon already Turns grey and sick with terror, the low wind

Truly, Oscar Wilde knew how to get out of sensationalism all that it can bear. But deeper than sensationalism, he does not go.

A POSTHUMOUS PLAY.

Oscar Wilde's poetic play, "The Duchess of Padua," published to-day, forms the first volume of a new uniform edition of the deceased writer's works, to be issued with characteristic enterprise by Messrs Methuen.

There is many a woman here in Padua, Whose husband spends the wages of the week In a coarse revel, or a tavern brawl.

Such criticism as has been offered in his case, is based on the greater achievements of the present posthumous play.

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA. A Play, By Oscar Wilde. London: Methuen & Co. 12s. 6d. net.

TWO WAYS OF WORKING.

To have published "The Duchess of Padua," finished just 25 years ago, is no service to Oscar Wilde's reputation, so service to prompt copies, printed for his production in 1881 at New York, the author took no steps to make it known in his lifetime.

But though it is no service to Oscar Wilde, the publication of "The Duchess of Padua" is the service to which Mr. Ross has given in the selection of the play.

If internal evidence goes for anything, there is enough to show that the play is the work of a man who was writing at a time when the world was in a ferment.

He could hardly have done it for mere compression, because, as some time goes, the play is not unduly long.

For when I stand before God, face to face, I would not have you, with a scarlet thread Around your white throat, coming up behind me.

The first phrase, with its intensely graphic "behind," is drained of half its force by the redemptive that follows.

We should add that the edition is beautiful in respect of its handmade paper and bold, dignified type, but the registration of some of the pages in my copy is defective.

"The Duchess of Padua." By Oscar Wilde. London: Methuen. 12s. 6d. B. C.

Special Publishers' Column.

"Culture is half way to heaven." —Grosvenor Aldrich.

Please write at once to Messrs. METHUEN for their List of New Books. It is well illustrated and very interesting. Send also for their List of New Novels.

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THE DUCHESS OF PADUA.

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Western Daily Press

The first volume in Messrs. Methuen's uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's works is "The Duchess of Padua," produced in New York in 1881.

London in Last Week Has an Example of the Short Life of Infamy.

OSCAR WILDE'S NAME PARADED.

London in Last Week Has an Example of the Short Life of Infamy. [By Cable to the Chicago Tribune.]

A BOOK OF THE DAY.

1908

OSCAR WILDE'S FIRST PLAY.

(By R. A. Scott-James.)

(PUBLISHED TO-DAY.)

"The Duchess of Padua." A Play by Oscar Wilde. Methuen. 12s. 6d. net.

It is a strange thing, at this date, coming upon a complete and hitherto unpublished work, written a quarter of a century ago, by a renowned author who has now for some years been dead. This first volume of the new set of his works contains a play which was written in 1882-1883, and was produced in New York in 1891. The original manuscript was stolen from the author's house, and of the twenty copies printed for private circulation two only remain. In one of these, corrected by the author's hand, "certain passages," Mr. Robert Ross tells us, "were found to have been bracketed, or deleted in pencil." Here they are retained, and indicated by brackets; and I think the reader will find that these are the most rhetorical, or the most falsely epigrammatic lines, in the play. Mr. Ross has rightly included them in this edition; but if ever the play is acted again these are certainly the passages which should be omitted.

A Tour de Force.

If we had not Mr. Ross's certain evidence that this poetic drama was the work of Wilde, one would have been inclined to suspect that no other hand could have produced it. It is the work of Oscar Wilde in his earliest productive phase. His head seems to be full of some of the sentimental and gory speeches in Shakespeare, and his verse is scattered with lines and phrases from the Sonnets, from "Romeo and Juliet," "Hamlet," "Macbeth," and other plays. He rejoices in the extravagant, fantastic Elizabethan metaphors—"your eyes are polished mirrors"—"than whom no saint in heaven was more pure"—"its bubble praise and windy favours." The whole work is an extraordinary tour-de-force, where the bitter phrase, the skilful passion, the ironical jest arrest the attention till it suddenly snaps with the dramatic surprise which closes each act and leaves the reader bewildered.

Even in this first play there is something ghoulish and uncanny in the author's use of his tools. He deals with the passions of love, filial feeling, and revenge. But he rejoices in the abnormality of emotion, passion gone awry, a good motive distorted into something ridiculous; and he seems to dance about in sacred places like Mephistopheles in Margaret's bed-chamber. At times the note he strikes sounds genuinely enough, if contempt and Machiavellianism can be genuine. But the love-note at first sounds theatrical and stilted; then, when it warms, it is love mixed with poison; and again, when it reaches a more intense pitch, the author for a time seems to forget that theatrical quality of his nature, and to be carried away by his own images and the passion which is born of fantastic and melodious or violent language. The whole is set in a lurid scene suggested in some such opening as this:

The wind is rising: how my ladder shook!
I thought that every gust would break the
cords! (Looks out at the city.)
Christ! What a night:
Great thunder in the heavens, and wild
lightnings
Striking from pinnacle to pinnacle
Across the city, till the dim houses seem
To shudder and to shake as each new
glare
Dashes adown the street.

Love and Revenge.

It begins melodramatically enough. Young Guido seeks the man who is to tell him who his father is, and the dark figure of Moranzone stalks upon the stage to urge him to be avenged upon the slayer of his father, the now reigning Duke of Padua; not to kill him at once in cold blood, but first to ingratiate himself, to

Pledge him in wine, drink from his cup,
and be
His intimate, so he will fawn on thee
Love thee, and trust thee in all secret
things.

If he bids thee be merry thou must laugh,
And if it be his humour to be sad
Thou shalt don sables. Then when the
time is ripe—

And Moranzone tells the youth how, having abjured all friends, all lovers, he may kill the Duke of Padua by the most unmerciful of deaths.

The Duke enunciates his Machiavellian code of morality with most un-Machiavellian frankness, and scoffs at his Duchess, Beatrice, for her mercy towards the crowd of citizens. Somewhat incongruous is Beatrice's abandoned declaration of love for Guido, coming directly after her dignified appeal for her people. In some too prolonged dialogue in blank verse they declare their passion for each other, till the dramatic sign from Moranzone reminds Guido of his oath, and he, unconvincingly, repels Beatrice, leaves her, and she cries out:

Revenge!

I think I never harmed a little child.
What should Revenge do coming to my
door?

It matters not, for Death is there already,
Waiting with his dim torch to light my
way.

'Tis true men hate thee, Death, and yet I
think

Thou wilt be kinder to me than my lover,
And so dispatch the messengers at once,
Hurry the lazy steeds of lingering day,
And let the night, thy sister, come in-
stead,

And drape the world in mourning; let the
owl,
Who is thy minister, scream from his
tower

And wake the toad with hooting, and the
bat,
That is the slave of dim Persephone,
Wheel through the sombre air on wander-
ing wing!

Tear up the shrieking mandrakes from
the earth

And bid them make us music, and tell
the mole

To dig deep down thy cold and narrow
bed,

For I shall lie within thine arms to-night.

After thus portraying such disloyalty to Love for the sake of Revenge, no artist but Oscar Wilde could have made his hero stay from revenge in the name of love, and then stay from love because his lady had taken revenge. This is what happens in the third act, when Guido finds that Beatrice, for his sake, has killed the tyrant whom he had spared. He turns from her, and she, in a new ferocity, charges him with the murder; she presides at the court where he is tried; rejoices in his condemnation; rejoices when he is silenced; shudders for her own sake when he speaks; regrets for his sake when he accuses himself; and comes to his cell to poison herself and

offer a way of escape which he rejects. And then Heaven, forsooth, is invoked for the last to acquit them, because of love, for the sins in which they now have the audacity to triumph.

How fantastic, how impossible, yet how brilliantly composed it all is. There are innumerable untrue images and metaphors, there are many halting lines, there are situations kept up too long; yet with his ringing dialectic, his fierce assertions of feeling, his appeal to the spirit of licence, his riotous declamation, the author electrifies and keeps us spell-bound. Amid eloquent passages of declamation he introduces violent phenomena of nature.

There is a storm
Will break upon this house before the
morning,
So horrible, that the white moon already
Turns grey and sick with terror, the low
wind
Goes moaning round the house, and the
high stars
Run madly through the vaulted firma-
ment,
As though the night wept tears of liquid
fire
For what the day shall look upon. O
weep,
Thou lamentable heaven! Weep thy fill!
Though sorrow like a cataract drench the
fields,
And make the earth one bitter lake of
tears,
It would not be enough. (A peal of
thunder.) Do you not hear,
[There is artillery in the Heaven to-night.]
Vengeance is awakened up, and has un-
loosed
His dogs upon the world, and in this
matter
which lies between us two, let him who
draws
The thunder on his head beware the ruin
Which the forked flame brings after.
(A flash of lightning followed by a peal
of thunder.)

Truly, Oscar Wilde knew how to get out of sensationalism all that it could bear. But deeper than sensationalism he does not go.

Glasgow News

A POSTHUMOUS PLAY.

Oscar Wilde's poetic play, "The Duchess of Padua," published to-day, forms the first volume of a new uniform edition of the deceased writer's works, to be issued with characteristic enterprise by Messrs Methuen. The play, now published for the first time, has a very peculiar history of its own. The original manuscript was stolen from the author's house, with other unpublished works, in April, 1895. It was translated by Dr Max Meyerfeld, and an unauthorised English prose translation from the German—printed in Paris, London, or America—is, along with other spurious works, ascribed to Oscar Wilde, offered for sale by certain dealers. In a note to the present volume, Mr Ross, who is Wilde's literary executor, informs us that "The Duchess of Padua" was finished in March, 1833, and produced at Hammerstein's Opera House, New York, in 1891. Twenty prompt copies were printed, and one of the only two now known to exist contains the author's corrections—certain passages bracketed or deleted in pencil. Whether these passages were omitted for stage presentation, Mr Ross remarks, or were intended by the author to be omitted altogether, there is no evidence to show. At anyrate they are retained in the present volume, and are indicated by brackets.

The very title of the play—though this may be consciously or unconsciously suggested to us by Webster's famous "Duchess of Malfi"—seems to hint at tragedy; and, after the first few pages, it drifts naturally into blank verse. This was in all likelihood Wilde's first real attempt at serious drama, and shows thus early the shaping of the accomplished artist in expression that he ultimately became. Dramatically, the merits of the play are less obviously convincing: though it must be borne in mind that Wilde was at this time literary man first, and playwright, as it were, by an afterthought. There are, as has been remarked, numerous passages bracketed by the author in the marked copy, which suggest that he saw much to alter and even discard in the play. After all it demands this, not on the score of length or wordiness—which are less obvious faults in merely reading a play—but to accelerate the movement and hasten the action of the tragedy. One somehow gets an impression of wordy duologues broken at intervals by marvelously dramatic "curtains"; and the feeling grows as we read that the author's pencil could have "cut" and altered many more passages with advantage. In Act III., for instance, by far the strongest in the book, we have the Duchess pleading thus with her scornful lover:—

There is many a woman here in Padua,
Some workman's wife, or ruder artisan's,
Whose husband spends the wages of the week
In a coarse revel, or a tavern brawl,
And reeling home late on the Saturday night,
Finds his wife sitting by a fireless hearth,
Trying to hush the child who cries for hunger,
And then sets to and beats his wife because
The child is hungry and the fire black.
Yet the wife loves him! and will rise next day
With some red bruise across a careworn face,
And sweep the house and do the common service
And try and smile, and only be too glad
If he does not beat her a second time
Before her child!—that is how women love.

Saturday night in the east-end of Padua some centuries ago may have been like that. After all, human nature has changed but little. In this play, however, and in the mouth of the distraught Duchess, the sentiment strikes a false note. It is out of the picture.

Against this one could quote many lines and phrases of great charm and polish; and from the lips of the citizens—who more obviously than usual act the part of a Greek chorus—drop quaint remarks, the epigrams of the plays of a later day in some cases. "The Duchess of Padua," as Wilde's friend remarks, was the prelude to a singularly brilliant and, if the last five years are omitted, a very happy life. Such criticism as has been offered must be taken as based on the greater achievements of his more mature years, and is by no means a belittling of the present posthumous play. As a matter of fact, no student of literature can read this early dramatic essay without enjoyment and profit. The book itself is a delight to handle, beautifully bound, with large type, and printed on handmade paper

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA. A Play. By Oscar Wilde. London: Methuen & Co. 12s 6d net.

TWO WAYS OF WORKING.

To have published "The Duchess of Padua," finished just 25 years ago, is no service to Oscar Wilde's reputation. Except for prompt copies, printed for its production in 1891 at New York, the author took no steps to make it known in his lifetime. He was as good a critic as an artist, and from his editor's dedicatory note we learn that, as might be suspected, his judgment did not fail him in regard to his own work. He would not lay "The Duchess of Padua" at the feet of his friend: "It is unworthy of her and unworthy of me." That was said when he was dying, and then it was perfectly true. It was less true of 1882, when Wilde was a newcomer in drama. For the play is as full of promise as it is obviously immature, imitative, and reminiscent. But in the stagecraft, in the economy of the parts, in the crisis in which each act culminates—the "curtain" which at once brings the interest of the act to a climax and awakens it anew for the next—it is easy to trace the mastery which, when, as in "Lady Windermere's Fan," it had found itself, was able deliberately to pit the attraction of such dialogue as had scarcely been attempted before against the interest of the action, without fear lest the attention of the spectators should lose its grasp of the plot.

But though it is no service to Oscar Wilde, the publication of "The Duchess of Padua" in the form in which Mr. Ross has given it is of extraordinary interest to those who care to understand his way of working. I have never heard at first hand how Wilde wrote, but it is impossible to suppose that it was as the linnet sings. Evidently, any one would say, his astonishingly brilliant essays were not rapidly or easily put together. Almost certainly they were the result of endless faceting and polish laboriously applied to phrases in their rough state, probably the small coin of his own conversation. Unless that is all wrong, of which it would take a lot to convince me, we have here in this unfinished play the earlier half of the process. In one of the two stage copies existing are the author's corrections. "Certain passages," says Mr. Ross,

were found to have been bracketed together or deleted in pencil. Whether these passages were omitted for stage presentation, or were intended to be omitted by the author altogether, there is no evidence to show.

If internal evidence goes for anything, there is enough and to spare. There are two ways of writing, as there are of building a house. One man lays brick upon brick till he gets to the top; another runs up girders from top to bottom until the whole structure is in place, and then clothes the skeleton. Plainly, this was the way Wilde wrote the "Duchess." He had his play in his mind and wanted to get to his last act—very rightly, for it is the best; and so what he could do well—the pet passages that perhaps he had made sure of long before—he did well, and the parts that did not interest him or made more demand on his imagination than he could quickly supply, he did badly; and when he came to look at the play for revision, as an artist with a name in the world to keep up, he struck them out.

He could hardly have done it for mere compression, because, as acting time goes, the play is not unduly long. It is much more significant that in all his emendations he has not struck out a really good line, and that what is left is enormously strengthened by what has been taken away. Not that the lines he has cut out are particularly bad verse; they are just the stuff with which dozens of minor poets and young dramatists fill up their waste places, and the author owed more to himself than that. A single passage shows how sound his judgment was; the Duchess speaks in Act V.:

For when I stand before God, face to face,
I would not have you, with a scarlet thread
Around your white throat, coming up behind
To say I did it: [Why the very devils
Who howl away in hell would pity me;
You will not be more cruel than the devils
Who are shut out from God.]

The first phrase, with its intensely graphic "behind," is drained of half its force by the rodomontade that follows. Even in 1882 that particular claptrap was wearisome, and my own belief is that Wilde (who knew, as his sonnets at Trinity show, what poetry was), never thought it anything else. He wrote it to mark time, and meant some day to take it all out and put something adequate in its place. The vice of that particular way of writing is that too often the golden moment never comes. The artist is betrayed by his indolence while he lives, and often by his executor, less scrupulous than Wilde's, when he does.

We should add that the edition is beautiful in respect of its handmade paper and bold, dignified type, but the registration of some of the pages in my copy is defective.

"The Duchess of Padua." By Oscar Wilde. London, 1908. Methuen.

14 February
1908

Evening Standard and St. James's

Special Publishers' Column.

"Culture is half way to heaven."

—GEORGE MEREDITH.

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THE WORKS OF OSCAR WILDE

Messrs. METHUEN have much pleasure in announcing that they have commenced the publication, in Twelve Volumes, of a Uniform Edition of the Works of Oscar Wilde. The books are reprinted from the latest editions issued under the superintendence of the Author, and in many cases they contain his last corrections. They are published by authority of his Literary Executor. THE DUCHESS OF PADUA is a New Play, and the other Books have been out of print for some years, and are now practically obtainable.

The Edition is limited to 1000 Copies for Great Britain and America, and is printed on hand-made paper, demy 8vo. The price of each volume is 12s. 6d. net. There is also an Edition, limited to 80 Copies, for Great Britain and America, on Japanese vellum, 42s. net each Volume. The whole Edition will be soon sold.

THE FIRST SIX VOLUMES ARE:—

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA.

A long play hitherto unpublished.

SALOME, AND OTHER PLAYS.

This volume includes a lately discovered play, "A Florentine Tragedy," and "Vera," an early work. "Salome" is in the original French.

LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN.

A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE.

AN IDEAL HUSBAND.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST.

Western Daily Press

The first volume in Messrs Methuen's uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's works is "The Duchess of Padua," produced in New York in 1891. It has not hitherto been published. The original MS. was stolen from the author's house in 1895; two prompt copies exist, and the present edition is based on one, containing the author's corrections. The period of the play is the latter half of the 16th century. Messrs Methuen announce, with reference to their collected edition of Oscar Wilde's works, that "Dorian Grey" will not be included in it. The present publisher of "Dorian Grey" is to issue it in a style uniform with the collected edition.

March 1908

OSCAR WILDE'S NAME PARADED.

London in Last Week Has an Example
of the Short Life of In-
famy.

[BY CABLE TO THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE.]

LONDON, March 7.—There was a striking example in London this week of how short lived is infamy or, rather, how completely fame can overshadow it. It is only a few short years since the name of Oscar Wilde was unspoken and unprinted and his plays, if produced at all, were given without the name of the author. Today sandwich men parade Regent street with his name in big letters and the newspapers advertise prominently the coming recital of selections from his poems.