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Oscar Wilde Scrapbook

Vol. 8

Daily Graphic.

Feb: 14, 1908.

A GIFT FROM THE GRAVE.

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The Plot.

The play opens with Guido Ferranti and his friend, Ascanio Cristofano, outside the Cathedral at Padua, where Guido has come to learn the secret of his parentage. He discovers that he is the son of the great Duke Lorenzo of Parma, who was betrayed by the Duke of Padua, his friend, to Giovanni Malatesta, and by him sent to the scaffold. Count Moranzone, who tells the story, arranges for Guido to enter the service of his father's betrayer, and when he, the Count, shall send Duke Lorenzo's dagger to his son, then will be the hour of revenge. Guido becomes consumed with a passion for the Duchess, and in the moment of ecstasy when she has just told him that

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They could not tell the measure of my love.
I love you, Guido.

a package is delivered to him by a messenger. It contains his father's dagger. He renounces his love, telling the Duchess:

I must go
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on which you cannot follow.

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He is inexorable, however, and leaves her. In the third act he is seen on his way to the Duke's chamber, to lay on his breast as he sleeps the dagger and a letter he has written. This he tells Moranzone is,

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REVIEWS OF NEW BOOKS.

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There is a joint flavour of Juliet's nurse and of Dogberry in this, and the latter is again suggested in a citizen's remark as to Guido that "maybe the law will not be hard on him, as he did not do it before." There is a primitive four-square humour about this kind of dialogue that may be in keeping with beefy Elizabethan Englishmen, but it is hardly consonant with the sub-acid humour of a Latin race. On the other hand, such a passage as the following unfailingly recalls some of the glowing apostrophes of the elder dramatists. It is from the prison scene.

You are my lady, and you are my love!
O hair of gold, O crimson lips, O face
Made for the luring and the love of man!
Incarnate image of pure loveliness!
Worshipping thee I do forget the past,
Worshipping them my soul comes close to thine,
Worshipping thee I seem to be a god,
And though they give my body to the block,
Yet is my love eternal!

Other examples might readily be given, but these must suffice. Occasionally we meet with the turn for epigram that was manifested in the later plays. The early influence alluded to is seen in such sentences as "I will be going back in a few minutes." Only a born Englishman, it would seem, is thoroughly at home in the idiomatic use of "will" and "shall." But these are trifles. "The Duchess of Padua" is not likely to prove popular in the twentieth century in the ordinary sense of the word. But it is a serious and dignified attempt to revive the poetic drama.

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Evening Standard and St. James's

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THE LITERARY WORLD.

The literary event of the week has been the general homage paid to Mr. George Meredith on his eightieth birthday. For once in a way it is homage wholly honourable to worshippers and worshipped. Not even the few faithful who worshipped in comparative solitude more than thirty years ago will feel jealous of this rush of writers and press of politicians to do honour where honour is so eminently due and has been so worthily won. Yet it is pleasant to see four names singled out from the crowd, those of Mr. Swinburne, Mr. Morley, Mr. Hardy, and Mr. Frederick Greenwood, who recognised Mr. Meredith's genius as confidently then as now. Mr. Henley, we may remember, when "his Louis" became "the world's Louis," annoyed to see the crowd about his idol, spoke unadvisedly with his lips, and unfortunately in print. Mr. Swinburne and Mr. Morley, I am sure, only rejoice to see the many distinguished men of many classes and many countries compelling the most self-respecting of men of genius to accept this testimony of widespread appreciation.

Oscar Wilde, in one of those "epigrams" which so easily became wearisome, said Mr. Meredith was "a prose Browning, and so was Browning." The epigram would have been even more succinct nor more inadequate if he had said Mr. Meredith was a poetic Browning. At least, if you take Browning's work as a whole, it might be said there was more prose in Browning's poetry than in Mr. Meredith's novels. Browning, it might be said again, was a poet who could in a moment lay the poet aside and become a man of the world. Mr. Meredith is a man of the world who has never been able to be anything but a poet. It is this union of poetry with worldly wit and wisdom that makes him so fascinating; his splendid idealism has never slackened his grip on reality, nor obscured in literature his marvellous and minute comprehension of real people. He is an optimist who can use his eyes. His Utopia is to be on this earth of men and women, not in Mars, with unreal fig[illegible] unreal imaginations.

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FOR THE MOTORIST.

["The Amateur Motorist." By Max Pemberton. (Hutchinson and Co.) 12s. 6d.]

These are probably books for motorists in which technical detail is more elaborately dealt with than in Mr. Max Pemberton's latest work, and may be that the motorist will refer rather to the when he needs some more obscure detail or other duly tabulated, but it is certain that in no other case will he need to go beyond the pages of "The Amateur Motorist." For the great difference between it and other motoring books—and here is most valuable quality from the motorist's standpoint—is that while fully as comprehensive of every aspect of motoring and the motor car as the exist to-day, it is anticipatory of motoring as it will be—as the others are not—and touches with a fine sense of proportion upon the historical aspect of automobilism, with which they are usefully complete. For instance, one finds oneself in perfect agreement with Mr. Pemberton on the subject of detachable rims and their importance in the motor

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The Work of a Genius.

In later years Wilde considered "The Duchess of Padua" as unworthy of him; in a sense it is. He knew the dramatic possibilities of blank verse. There are passages of great beauty and insistent passion; but the note of tragedy is not sustained. There are moments when the appeal is to our interest rather than to our pity and our terror. It is the work of a poet in whose veins the rich blood of life flows so tempestuously that he finds it difficult to maintain the suggestion of impending calamity. The lighter portions seem to come as welcome reliefs, breathing spaces in which he can gather himself together before plunging once more into the gloom. Yet at times the note of doom is unmistakably struck. In Act III., for instance, when the Duchess, with bloody hands, cries:—

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 firmament,
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,
't would not be enough.

In the light of subsequent events there seems little doubt that Oscar Wilde found himself, as far as the stage is concerned, when he wrote "Lady Windermere's Fan." In his early tragedy there is the same note that twenty years later found expression in "De Profundis." We feel that we have read the work of a genius, but it fails to convince. Mr. Ross proves himself a trustworthy editor, he indicates all the author's revisions; and, no matter how obvious a revision or omission may seem, he has held his hand. Both he and his publishers are to be congratulated upon the format of the new collected edition of Wilde's works, of which this is the first volume.

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REVIEWS OF NEW BOOKS.

*OSCAR WILDE'S PLAYS.

Now that a certain revival of interest is being shown in the works of Oscar Wilde, their republication is opportune. The first volume of this uniform edition consists of the earliest of Wilde's plays, "The Duchess of Padua." This is an ambitious effort, and one that must be allowed to have achieved a very considerable degree of success. We need not suggest comparison with Webster's "Duchess of Malfi." So far as the title is concerned that is sufficiently obvious. But we shall have to draw sundry parallels with another and more famous Elizabethan tragedy. Before doing so, however, we may fitly note some points of history in connection with the play, and give a brief sketch of the plot.

"The Duchess of Padua" was written when Wilde was staying in Paris, where, although he appears to have been studying French literature with some closeness, his mind reverted to the great English dramatists as a model rather than to those of the French classic school. His hope was that Miss Mary Anderson would produce the work, but this was not destined to fulfilment. But, according to Mr. L. C. Ingleby, the play was read for copyright purposes as recently as last March by an amateur dramatic society at the St. James's Theatre by the kindness of Mr. George Alexander. That is its history so far as this country is concerned. It has been produced, without much success, in America and Germany. The latter production was at Hamburg in 1904, an occasion on which the stars in their courses may be said to have fought against its success. The hero had a severe cold, and during a long speech of the heroine in the last act, at a time when he is supposed to be asleep, he kept sneezing. The heroine herself did not know her part, and on the third night one of the principal characters went mad on the stage and had to be taken to an asylum. It will thus be seen that the play has so far been dogged by misfortune to a large extent. We hope, therefore, that a fair hearing will be given it before long in England in order that its worth as an acting drama may be removed from the region of speculation.

The play deals with the fortunes of Guido Ferranti, a youth of noble birth, who has been brought up in humble fashion at Mantua as the son of a yeoman. The scene is at Padua, and the time is the latter half of the sixteenth century, the Cinque Cento of the vivid and ebullient Italian Renaissance. Guido is called to Padua to learn the secret of his parentage from Count Moranzone, who informs him that he is the son of the late Duke of Padua, Lorenzo, who was betrayed and met his death through the intrigue of the reigning Duke, Simone Gesso. Moranzone induces Guido to swear to revenge his father by slaying Gesso, with whom he takes service. But the oath is not to take effect until Moranzone sends Guido the dagger of his murdered father, which is to be the signal for the perpetration of the deed. In the meantime he is to forswear the love of women and consecrate his life to the purpose of revenge. Moranzone withdraws, and Guido, vowing on his own account to the aforesaid effect on his drawn dagger, is met by a vision of radiant loveliness in the person of the Duchess of Padua, the third wife of her truculent spouse. This ends the first act.

In the second, as might be foreseen, Guido and the Duchess fall in love. Mutual avowal is interrupted by the sinister figure of Moranzone, who presently sends the dagger as agreed upon. Guido receives it and steels his heart against love on the ground that his soul will be stained with murder. He bids farewell to Duchess Beatrice, telling her that there is a barrier to their union. Beatrice, dissatisfied, accuses the Count of taking Guido from her. The reply is that Guido does not love her, and that she will never see him again. Beatrice in the following act is discovered by her lover at the entrance to the Duke's apartments at night. Guido's intention is to place the dagger, with a paper stating who he is, upon the Duke's bed and flee from the city, rather than fulfil his oath. His plans, however, are upset by the Duchess's confession that she has stabbed her husband for love of Guido, who then refuses to have anything to do with her. Maddened by love and thirsting for revenge, the furious woman retaliates by accusing Guido of the crime, and as he is discovered by the palace soldiery with the bloodstained knife upon him, the circumstantial evidence is strong against him.

The fourth act brings us to the trial of Guido, who will not betray his mistress, although Moranzone, who recognises the duchess's dagger, urges him to do so. Guido maintains to the Count that he did the deed, and begs to be allowed to name the guilty person in open court. The duchess, afraid that he will turn accuser, tries to leave the court, but is prevented, and in the end Guido confesses himself the murderer. He is condemned to death, and as he is led forth the duchess runs towards him with outstretched arms. In the final act, Beatrice, disguised, visits the condemned man in prison, there takes poison and dies, and Guido stabs himself with her dagger.

In considering the plot, one is met at the outset with a difficulty. The story obviously hinges on the tender conscience of Guido, who will not consent to let love take its course because he will have the stain of murder upon him. Yet he finds no obstacle in undertaking to commit murder. It is only when, by intention, it has been committed, that his conscience pricks him, and then not for the deed itself. We are not led to suppose he will suffer any remorse for the crime. It is only when it shall have been carried out that his super-delicate mind shrinks from logical consequence in a particular direction. He has no sort of regret, in contemplation, for the act of revenge. It is only when this act sullies an abstract image of affection that he finds it necessary to sacrifice both his own feelings and those of the lady by breaking away. This strikes one as somewhat fine-drawn and inadequate. Even then the vacillating hero changes his mind. At the eleventh hour he decides to "cut his lucky" and leave both crime and love behind him. Of course, when the woman intervenes in so decisive a fashion, each of the lovers becomes largely a puppet in the hands of fate, and the development of the drama proceeds on lines normal enough for the age and clime. Granting, then, the difficulty at the end of the second act, the continuation is not only probable but ingenious, and in a high degree tragic. The situations thenceforward are unforced, and bear an air of truth to nature—Italian nature particularly. The reader's interest is carried forward to the culmination of the tragedy without slackening, and there is no suspicion of anti-climax. The deed is done, and the curtain falls, though exactly what is going to be the end of it all we are not sure until the end comes.

So much, then, for the construction of the drama, which must be admitted on this score a very remarkable first play. But there is also a good deal to be said, and much that is favourable, on the matter of diction. This, taken throughout, sustains a level of elevation and eloquence. Here and there inconsistencies may be noted in the shape of modernisms that jar upon a sensitive ear, and also, curiously enough, sundry Hibernian turns of phrase which show that the author had not quite worn off the effects of early association. The most weighty accusation that can be brought against him under this head is a marked tendency to imitate the citizens and serving-men of Shakespeare, even as the play itself inevitably suggests "Romeo and Juliet." The fourth act supplies an example. The populace are assembling for the trial of Guido, and the duchess's tirewoman is asked for news of her mistress. This is her reply:

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As he stealthily ascends the staircase the Duchess appears from the Duke's bedchamber. She herself has murdered her lord. Guido spurns her, and she accuses him of the crime. He pleads guilty before his judges, and is condemned. In the last act the repentant Duchess makes her way to Guido's cell, and, seeing a cup of poison, placed beside him by his gaolers, drinks it while he sleeps. Then she shows him how he can escape, but he declines, and, after reconciliation with his mistress, stabs himself, and falls across her knees.

The Work of a Genius.

In later years Wilde considered "The Duchess of Padua" as unworthy of him; in a sense it is. He knew the dramatic possibilities of blank verse. There are passages of great beauty and insistent passion; but the note of tragedy is not sustained. There are moments when the appeal is to our interest rather than to our pity and our terror. It is the work of a poet in whose veins the rich blood of life flows so tempestuously that he finds it difficult to maintain the suggestion of impending calamity. The lighter portions seem to come as welcome reliefs, breathing spaces in which he can gather himself together before plunging once more into the gloom. Yet at times the note of doom is unmistakably struck. In Act III., for instance, when the Duchess, with bloody hands, cries:—

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 firmament,
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,
't would not be enough.

In the light of subsequent events there seems little doubt that Oscar Wilde found himself, as far as the stage is concerned, when he wrote "Lady Windermere's Fan." In his early tragedy there is the same note that twenty years later found expression in "De Profundis." We feel that we have read the work of a genius, but it fails to convince. Mr. Ross proves himself a trustworthy editor, he indicates all the author's revisions; and, no matter how obvious a revision or omission may seem, he has held his hand. Both he and his publishers are to be congratulated upon the format of the new collected edition of Wilde's works, of which this is the first volume.

Feb. 14, 1908.

Irish Times,

Feb: 15. 1908

On the 13th Messrs. Methuen published 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.

Newsagent & Booksellers Review.

Feb: 29, 1908

Six volumes out of 12 of the new edition of the works of Oscar Wilde are ready, and it is expected that the whole edition will shortly be exhausted. 12s. 6d. net per vol. Methuen.

Birmingham Post

Feb: 1st.

REVIEWS OF NEW BOOKS.

*OSCAR WILDE'S PLAYS.

Now that a certain revival of interest is being shown in the works of Oscar Wilde, their republication is opportune. The first volume of this uniform edition consists of the earliest of Wilde's plays, "The Duchess of Padua." This is an ambitious effort, and one that must be allowed to have achieved a very considerable degree of success. We need not suggest comparison with Webster's "Duchess of Malfi." So far as the title is concerned that is sufficiently obvious. But we shall have to draw sundry parallels with another and more famous Elizabethan tragedy. Before doing so, however, we may fitly note some points of history in connection with the play, and give a brief sketch of the plot.

"The Duchess of Padua" was written when Wilde was staying in Paris, where, although he appears to have been studying French literature with some closeness, his mind reverted to the great English dramatists as a model rather than to those of the French classic school. His hope was that Miss Mary Anderson would produce the work, but this was not destined to fulfilment. But, according to Mr. L. C. Ingleby, the play was read for copyright purposes as recently as last March by an amateur dramatic society at the St. James's Theatre by the kindness of Mr. George Alexander. That is its history so far as this country is concerned. It has been produced, without much success, in America and Germany. The latter production was at Hamburg in 1904, an occasion on which the stars in their courses may be said to have fought against its success. The hero had a severe cold, and during a long speech of the heroine in the last act, at a time when he is supposed to be asleep, he kept sneezing. The heroine herself did not know her part, and on the third night one of the principal characters went mad on the stage and had to be taken to an asylum. It will thus be seen that the play has so far been dogged by misfortune to a large extent. We hope, therefore, that a fair hearing will be given it before long in England in order that its worth as an acting drama may be removed from the region of speculation.

The play deals with the fortunes of Guido Ferranti, a youth of noble birth, who has been brought up in humble fashion at Mantua as the son of a yeoman. The scene is at Padua, and the time is the latter half of the sixteenth century, the Cinque Cento of the vivid and ebullient Italian Renaissance. Guido is called to Padua to learn the secret of his parentage from Count Moranzone, who informs him that he is the son of the late Duke of Padua, Lorenzo, who was betrayed and met his death through the intrigue of the reigning Duke, Simone Gesso. Moranzone induces Guido to swear to revenge his father by slaying Gesso, with whom he takes service. But the oath is not to take effect until Moranzone sends Guido the dagger of his murdered father, which is to be the signal for the perpetration of the deed. In the meantime he is to forswear the love of women and consecrate his life to the purpose of revenge. Moranzone withdraws, and Guido, vowing on his own account to the aforesaid effect on his drawn dagger, is met by a vision of radiant loveliness in the person of the Duchess of Padua, the third wife of her truculent spouse. This ends the first act.

In the second, as might be foreseen, Guido and the Duchess fall in love. Mutual avowal is interrupted by the sinister figure of Moranzone, who presently sends the dagger as agreed upon. Guido receives it and steels his heart against love on the ground that his soul will be stained with murder. He bids farewell to Duchess Beatrice, telling her that there is a barrier to their union. Beatrice, dissatisfied, accuses the Count of taking Guido from her. The reply is that Guido does not love her, and that she will never see him again. Beatrice in the following act is discovered by her lover at the entrance to the Duke's apartments at night. Guido's intention is to place the dagger, with a paper stating who he is, upon the Duke's bed and flee from the city, rather than fulfil his oath. His plans, however, are upset by the Duchess's confession that she has stabbed her husband for love of Guido, who then refuses to have anything to do with her. Maddened by love and thirsting for revenge, the furious woman retaliates by accusing Guido of the crime, and as he is discovered by the palace soldiery with the bloodstained knife upon him, the circumstantial evidence is strong against him.

The fourth act brings us to the trial of Guido, who will not betray his mistress, although Moranzone, who recognises the duchess's dagger, urges him to do so. Guido maintains to the Count that he did the deed, and begs to be allowed to name the guilty person in open court. The duchess, afraid that he will turn accuser, tries to leave the court, but is prevented, and in the end Guido confesses himself the murderer. He is condemned to death, and as he is led forth the duchess runs towards him with outstretched arms. In the final act, Beatrice, disguised, visits the condemned man in prison, there takes poison and dies, and Guido stabs himself with her dagger.

In considering the plot, one is met at the outset with a difficulty. The story obviously hinges on the tender conscience of Guido, who will not consent to let love take its course because he will have the stain of murder upon him. Yet he finds no obstacle in undertaking to commit murder. It is only when, by intention, it has been committed, that his conscience pricks him, and then not for the deed itself. We are not led to suppose he will suffer any remorse for the crime. It is only when it shall have been carried out that his super-delicate mind shrinks from logical consequence in a particular direction. He has no sort of regret, in contemplation, for the act of revenge. It is only when this act sullies an abstract image of affection that he finds it necessary to sacrifice both his own feelings and those of the lady by breaking away. This strikes one as somewhat fine-drawn and inadequate. Even then the vacillating hero changes his mind. At the eleventh hour he decides to "cut his lucky" and leave both crime and love behind him. Of course, when the woman intervenes in so decisive a fashion, each of the lovers becomes largely a puppet in the hands of fate, and the development of the drama proceeds on lines normal enough for the age and clime. Granting, then, the difficulty at the end of the second act, the continuation is not only probable but ingenious, and in a high degree tragic. The situations thenceforward are unforced, and bear an air of truth to nature—Italian nature particularly. The reader's interest is carried forward to the culmination of the tragedy without slackening, and there is no suspicion of anti-climax. The deed is done, and the curtain falls, though exactly what is going to be the end of it all we are not sure until the end comes.

So much, then, for the construction of the drama, which must be admitted on this score a very remarkable first play. But there is also a good deal to be said, and much that is favourable, on the matter of diction. This, taken throughout, sustains a level of elevation and eloquence. Here and there inconsistencies may be noted in the shape of modernisms that jar upon a sensitive ear, and also, curiously enough, sundry Hibernian turns of phrase which show that the author had not quite worn off the effects of early association. The most weighty accusation that can be brought against him under this head is a marked tendency to imitate the citizens and serving-men of Shakespeare, even as the play itself inevitably suggests "Romeo and Juliet." The fourth act supplies an example. The populace are assembling for the trial of Guido, and the duchess's tirewoman is asked for news of her mistress. This is her reply:

> O well-a-day! O miserable day! O day! O misery! Why, it is just nineteen years last June, at Michaelmas, since I was married to my husband, and it is August now, and here is the Duke murdered; there is a coincidence for you!

There is a joint flavour of Juliet's nurse and of Dogberry in this, and the latter is again suggested in a citizen's remark as to Guido that "maybe the law will not be hard on him, as he did not do it before." There is a primitive four-square humour about this kind of dialogue that may be in keeping with beefy Elizabethan Englishmen, but it is hardly consonant with the sub-acid humour of a Latin race. On the other hand, such a passage as the following unfailingly recalls some of the glowing apostrophes of the elder dramatists. It is from the prison scene.

> You are my lady, and you are my love!
> O hair of gold, O crimson lips, O face
> Made for the luring and the love of man!
> Incarnate image of pure loveliness!
> Worshipping thee I do forget the past,
> Worshipping them my soul comes close to thine,
> Worshipping thee I seem to be a god,
> And though they give my body to the block,
> Yet is my love eternal!

Other examples might readily be given, but these must suffice. Occasionally we meet with the turn for epigram that was manifested in the later plays. The early influence alluded to is seen in such sentences as "I will be going back in a few minutes." Only a born Englishman, it would seem, is thoroughly at home in the idiomatic use of "will" and "shall." But these are trifles. "The Duchess of Padua" is not likely to prove popular in the twentieth century in the ordinary sense of the word. But it is a serious and dignified attempt to revive the poetic drama.

* The Duchess of Padua. A Play. By Oscar Wilde. (Methuen.) 12[illegible]

Evening Standard and St. James's

27

Feb. 15. 1908.

Drama.

"The Duchess of Padua." By Oscar Wilde. Methuen.

(The first volume of a limited uniform edition of Mr. Wilde's works, to be sold in sets only at 12s. 6d. net each "The Duchess of Padua" is the play of which we have heard much, but which has not been previously published. Written in 1882-3, it w[illegible] in 1891. The dialogue is in blank verse; the scene being laid in Padua in the latter half of the sixteenth century.)

THE LITERARY WORLD.

The literary event of the week has been the general homage paid to Mr. George Meredith on his eightieth birthday. For once in a way it is homage wholly honourable to worshippers and worshipped. Not even the few faithful who worshipped in comparative solitude more than thirty years ago will feel jealous of this rush of writers and press of politicians to do honour where honour is so eminently due and has been so worthily won. Yet it is pleasant to see four names singled out from the crowd, those of Mr. Swinburne, Mr. Morley, Mr. Hardy, and Mr. Frederick Greenwood, who recognised Mr. Meredith's genius as confidently then as now. Mr. Henley, we may remember, when "his Louis" became "the world's Louis," annoyed to see the crowd about his idol, spoke unadvisedly with his lips, and unfortunately in print. Mr. Swinburne and Mr. Morley, I am sure, only rejoice to see the many distinguished men of many classes and many countries compelling the most self-respecting of men of genius to accept this testimony of widespread appreciation.

Oscar Wilde, in one of those "epigrams" which so easily became wearisome, said Mr. Meredith was "a prose Browning, and so was Browning." The epigram would have been even more succinct nor more inadequate if he had said Mr. Meredith was a poetic Browning. At least, if you take Browning's work as a whole, it might be said there was more prose in Browning's poetry than in Mr. Meredith's novels. Browning, it might be said again, was a poet who could in a moment lay the poet aside and become a man of the world. Mr. Meredith is a man of the world who has never been able to be anything but a poet. It is this union of poetry with worldly wit and wisdom that makes him so fascinating; his splendid idealism has never slackened his grip on reality, nor obscured in literature his marvellous and minute comprehension of real people. He is an optimist who can use his eyes. His Utopia is to be on this earth of men and women, not in the air, with unreal fig[illegible] unreal imaginations.

Westminster Gazette. Feb: 15.

The first of the six volumes of the uniform edition of Oscar Wilde's authentic works is "The Duchess of Padua: a Play" (Methuen). One of only two copies known to exist contains the author's corrections, and on it the present edition is based. This edition of Wilde's works is being printed on hand-made paper, and is limited to 1,000 copies for England and America.

Free Lance Feb: 19.

FORTHCOMING BOOK EVENTS.

Messrs. Methuen announce a uniform edition, in about fourteen volumes, of the works of Oscar Wilde. The books are reprinted from the last editions issued under the superintendence of the author; and in many cases they contain his last corrections. The first volume, devoted to the play "The Duchess of Padua," has just been issued, and five other volumes will shortly follow.

Darlington Times, Feb. 15. 1908.

"THE DUCHESS OF PADUA."

"The Duchess of Padua: A Play," by Oscar Wilde (Methuen and Co., pp. 210, 12s. 6d. net), is the first volume of a uniform edition of the complete works of Oscar Wilde, which the unfortunate dramatist's friend and literary executor, Mr. Robert Ross, is now editing for Messrs. Methuen and Co. "The Duchess of Padua" is a blank verse play written by Wilde so far back as 1882-3, when he was but in his 27th year. It was produced in New York in 1891, and privately printed for the purposes of copyright, but only two of the twenty copies struck off are now known to exist, and the edition which has been clandestinely circulated in this country and in America is an unauthorised prose re-translation from a German version made by Dr. Max Meyerfield in 1904. To all intents and purposes, then, we have here a new play by Oscar Wilde, and there can be no question of its interest and importance. The story on which it is based is of sixteenth century Italy, but the very full stage directions no less than the dialogue itself go to show that over and above the cultivation of external realism the author intended to give us a representation and a criticism of life. "The Duchess of Padua" has an abundance of the sparkle and cleverness as well as the literary brilliance of the later plays by which Wilde won a foremost place amongst that little band of writers for the stage who in the early eighties lifted English drama out of its former position of helpless dependence on adaptations from the French. Oscar Wilde as a playwright excelled on the literary as well as on the purely dramatic side, and his plays are as enjoyable in book-form as on the stage. In Simone Gesso, the Duke of Padua, he had a character after his own heart, offording unlimited scope for paradox of diction and ideas. Lovers of sparkling epigram will not be disappointed in the old Duke who could say that

". . . . . popularity
Is the one insult I have never suffered,"

and that

Conscience is but the name which cowardice,
Fleeing from battle, scrawls upon its shield."

The Duke is an excellent piece of characterisation such as has rarely been surpassed in any play of the last quarter of a century. The piece, however, suffers here and there from a certain license of speech and occasional prolixity which Wilde himself saw fit to correct on further reflection by enclosing offending passages within brackets or deleting them in pencil. Mr. Ross professes himself unable to determine whether Wilde wished to exclude these altogether, or merely to cut them out from the acting version. In our opinion the play would gain considerably by the total omission of these passages, which Mr. Ross has printed within square brackets. In all other respects the volume is a notable piece of book-making. It is printed on hand-made paper, and limited to a thousand copies for the United Kingdom and America. The edition is sold only in sets of fourteen volumes, of which five others besides "The Duchess of Padua" are now ready.

Sunday Times

Feb. 16.

"The Duchess of Padua."

There is something almost uncanny about the sensation of turning over the pages of what is virtually a new play of Oscar Wilde's, and such one may call "the Duchess of Padua," which, though written in '82 and produced nine years later in New York, has only just been published as first volume in the very handsome collected edition of its author's works (Methuen, 12s. 6d. net). The play is a gorgeous romantic tragedy closely resembling Webster's work and following with almost slavish fidelity the conventions and the very style of the Jacobean drama. It is interesting and it is beautiful as would be a perfect modern reproduction of an old rood-screen, or a piece of tapestry, or a jewelled cup, or an intaglio, but its æsthetic value is not very much more than that of such imitations, because not original or sincere craftsmanship. For the artificiality of a Webster was unconscious largely and of his time, that of Oscar Wilde is self-conscious and deliberately archaic. Granted, however, that "The Duchess of Padua" is an experiment in an outworn mode, and that its vehicle is mere rhetoric and rhetoric which indulges in the most reckless "conceits," there is no denying that it is a wonderful *tour de force*, and that it tells a story of passion and crime with a warmth of mediæval colouring and a lyrical splendour of phrasing that a Dekker or a Ford might envy. And for those who do not object to the heroine's being at different times four distinct women—a helpless saint who pleads to her tyrant husband the cause of his starving people, a scarlet sinner who commits murder for the sake of love, a revengeful fury who repays her lover's horror of her crime by bringing him to the scaffold, and a penitent of love who tries to save the hero's life and shares his fate—for those, too, who do not mind hearing echoes of the Jacobean poets in every other line, the music of the verse will prove a sheer delight. But the imitation is patent, nay flagrant, and the playwright's borrowing, from Shakespeare are innumerable—from "Hamlet," "Othello," "Julius Cæsar," "As You Like It," "Romeo and Juliet," and even the Sonnets. There are passages that deliberately copy Othello's farewell to his profession and his dying speech, and Juliet's reproachful address to the dead Romeo in the tomb scene, and all through the play the very rhythms of the Bard are used again and again. Only a lengthy quotation can furnish an idea of the quality of the play's verse, or the extent of its indebtedness. Here is a speech of the duchess contemplating suicide. It is not so plainly derivative as other passages:

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 instead,
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 wandering 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 die within thine arms to-night.

One curious trick of amateurishness disfigures the play, and that is the poet's exasperating habit of alternating "thou" and "you," sometimes within the space of a single line; otherwise his literary taste is impeccable.

DAILY TELEGRAPH,

Feb. 19.

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA.

(METHUEN. 12s 6d net.)

With this handsome volume, beautifully printed on hand-made paper and sumptuously bound, Oscar Wilde's literary executor, Mr. Robert Ross, commences the publication of that "friendship's garland"—a worthy collected edition of the complete works of the ill-starred author of "Salome." The edition is worthy of its opportunity. All that friendly enthusiasm and artistic choice could do will here be done to raise a monument more lasting than brass; and the fortunate thousand who become possessors of this strictly-limited series will add to their book-shelves a collection of volumes representative of the very best product of modern book-manufacture. Oscar Wilde, unfortunate indeed in life, is at least fortunate now, in the hands into which the vindication of his literary fame has been entrusted.

"The Duchess of Padua," the first of Wilde's works to be so reprinted, is an early tragedy, written in the years 1882-1883, and hitherto available only in a set of prompt copies, printed for the production of the play in America in 1891, of which only two are known to have survived. From one of these, enriched by its author's corrections (chiefly in the form of diplomatic "cuts"), the present version has been carefully printed. The play is unquestionably inte-

[illegible]

Hendon District Council have referred to committee forty-three tenders for the erection of fifty artisans' dwellings on a site at Child's-hill belonging to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. The tenders varied from £9,979 to £13,125. The scheme provides for the erection of two types of cottages, to be let at 10s and 7s 6d per week.

W. N. SHAW, Director.

10.	Do.	S. Same as No. 5 to 6.

9.	Ireland,	N. Same as No. 6 to 2.

8.	England, (and S. Wales)	S.W., Same as No. 3 to 5.
7.	England, (and N. Wales)	N.W.
6.	Scotland,	W. Same as No. 6 to 2.
5.	England, (Lon. & Chnl.)	S. rather colder.
4.	Midlands	E. able, some showers, bright intervals.
3.	Do.	E. W. and N.W. winds, strong; changeable, some showers.
2.	England, N.E.	N. cold, changeable, some snow or sleet showers.
1.	Do.	E.
0.	Scotland,	N. W. and N.W. winds, strong in places;

PORKBASTE.
DISTRICTS.

The depression of the Norwegian coasts is at present almost stationary, and the conditions remain favourable for the passage of small secondary disturbances across these islands, moving generally in a S.E. direction. The weather is therefore likely to remain in a very changeable condition, with strong or high winds from the W. and N.W. on many parts of our coasts. A decrease of temperature is probable in the S.

GENERAL INFERENCE

Reported at Keyham.
The sea is moderate off the South and East of England, but is rather rough on our Western Coasts, and rough off the North of Scotland.

In the course of the day the thermometer has risen to 66deg and upwards at most of the English and Irish stations, to 65deg at Brighton, and to 60deg at Torquay; in the North and East of Scotland it has not exceeded 55deg, and at Sumburgh Head it has not exceeded 50deg. The amount of bright sunshine has been small in the South and East of England, but larger in the North; at Harrogate nearly six hours have been recorded. Squalls of rain have been experienced during the day in most parts of the United Kingdom, and snow showers in the North of Scotland.

LONDON OBSERVATIONS.

ST. JAMES'S PARK, 6.0 p.m.—Bar., 29.60in.; therm., 66deg.; wind, N.W., fresh; weather, fine. Sunc 6.0 p.m. yesterday: Temp. in shade—Highest, 65deg.; lowest, 45deg.; lowest on grass, 35deg. Rainfall, 0.09in.

WESTMINSTER.—Bright sunshine recorded, 1.5 hour.

Truth,

February 19. 1908.

The first volume of Messrs. Methuen's uniform edition of the works of Oscar Wilde contains "The Duchess of Padua," a play written about twenty-five years ago, and produced in America in 1891, but not previously published in book form. Only two stage copies are known to exist, and the present edition is based on one in which the author had made many corrections. Some of the other books to be included in this series—which is published under the supervision and by the authority of Wilde's literary executor—have long been out of print, and are now practically unobtainable except in pirated and mutilated copies. The uniform edition is finely printed on hand-made paper. There will be fourteen volumes, price 12s. 6d. each, and the edition is limited to 1,000 sets.

Glasgow Herald

Feb. 24

POETRY, VERSE, AND DRAMA.

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

This drama, now published for the first time, was written in 1882-3, and produced in New York in 1891, the present text being based on a prompt-copy bearing the author's corrections. We are not aware of any authentic source of the story of the play; the argument, indeed, as well as the title, has probably been suggested by Webster's "Duchess of Malfi." Guido Ferranti, being made aware of his real identity and that his father, the Duke of Padua, was murdered by the present holder of that title, enters the usurper's service as a page, with a view to winning revenge. But he is diverted from his purpose by the beauty of the Duchess, the martyr of her brutal husband. In a scene which is a curious medley of Webster, Shakespeare, and the Paola and Francesca episode in Dante, Guido and the Duchess discover that they cannot live without each other. They arrange to flee to Venice; but at the last moment Guido discovers that the Duke, on whose breast, in sign of a magnanimous revenge, he had meant to leave lying a dagger and a letter, has been murdered by the Duchess. He refuses to go, and the Duchess, in rage and despair, accuses him publicly of the crime. He is tried, and found guilty; and when, against the Duchess's will, he is allowed to speak for himself, he breaks silence, not with an accusation against her, but with a declaration of his own guilt. The Duchess, struck to the heart, accuses herself, but no one will listen to her. She visits the prison in disguise, attempts to persuade Guido to escape, and when he refuses takes poison; and an intensely dramatic climax closes with the suicide of Guido over her body as the executioners come in. The play is essentially a stage-play, and many parts of it seem bald and staccato without the action and gesture for which they call. The style, though always limpid and effective, and occasionally very beautiful, is far from original; it is an exquisite symphony of Elizabethan and Victorian echoes; while the dialogue of the soldiers and townsfolk shows the inability of the author—as of nearly all his literary contemporaries—to escape from the Shakespearian convention of quibble and crassness. A curious artistic discord is caused by the fact that the serious duologue with which the play opens is in prose; this, however, was probably remedied in the original manuscript, which, we learn, was stolen from the author's house in 1895. Despite its defects, the play, in its breadth of characterisation, its richness of colouring, its melody of language, and its artistically effective construction, is a notable addition to the somewhat scanty library of nineteenth century English drama, and we trust to have our impressions of it confirmed at no distant date by an adequate stage-performance. We would call special attention to the simple and tasteful beauty of the format, both as regards binding and printing.

unday Times Feb. 16.

ne Duchess of Padua."

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ink I never harmed a little child,
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natters not, for Death is there already,
ing with his dim torch to light my way.
true men hate thee, Death, and yet I think
wilt be kinder to me than my lover.
so dispatch the messengers at once,
ry the lazy steeds of lingering day,
let the night, thy sister, come instead,
drape the world in mourning; let the owl,
is thy minister, scream from his tower
wake the toad with hooting, and the bat,
is the slave of dim Persephone,
el through the sombre air on wandering wing.
up the shrieking mandrakes from the earth
bid them make us music, and tell the mole
dig deep down thy cold and narrow bed,
I shall die within thine arms to-night.

curious trick of amateurishness disfigures play, and that is the poet's exasperating it of alternating "thou" and "you," some- es within the space of a single line; other- e his literary taste is impeccable.

DAILY TELEGRAPH, Feb. 19.

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA.

(METHUEN. 12s 6d net.)

With this handsome volume, beautifully printed on hand-made paper and sumptuously bound, Oscar Wilde's literary executor, Mr. Robert Ross, commences the publication of that "friendship's garland"—a worthy collected edition of the complete works of the ill-starred author of "Salome." The edition is worthy of its opportunity. All that friendly enthusiasm and artistic choice could do will here be done to raise a monument more lasting than brass; and the fortunate thousand who become possessors of this strictly-limited series will add to their book-shelves a collection of volumes representative of the very best product of modern book-manufacture. Oscar Wilde, unfortunate indeed in life, is at least fortunate now, in the hands into which the vindication of his literary fame has been entrusted.

"The Duchess of Padua," the first of Wilde's works to be so reprinted, is an early tragedy, written in the years 1882-1883, and hitherto available only in a set of prompt copies, printed for the production of the play in America in 1891, of which only two are known to have survived. From one of these, enriched by its author's corrections (chiefly in the form of diplomatic "cuts"), the present version has been carefully printed. The play is unquestionably interesting from the circumstances of its production; but it would be vain to pretend that it is of very high poetic value. In a dedicatory prelude, addressed to a nameless lady, Mr. Ross admits that its author had doubts about its worthiness, and it is probably true, as he also suggests, that no one was more alive to its faults than its own begetter. The poetry is technically very crude and immature. We get endless confusions between the second person singular and the second person plural, such as:

"Father, I think thou knowest my resolve,
That I am doing what you would have done."

We get such elementary errors as:

"Have you not made him heretic, and uttered
Anathema maranatha against him?"

as though the word "maranatha" ("God be with you!") were part of a denunciatory oath. And beyond such verbal slips, we are confronted with a series of phrases so closely reminiscent of Shakespeare as to be almost childishly ingenuous. Thus, within a few pages of each other, there will be found phrases gathered almost verbatim from "Henry IV.," "Othello," "Hamlet," "Romeo and Juliet," and "Macbeth"; while, in another passage, there is more than a suggestive reference to the main thesis of Browning's "Last Duchess." Such echoes, natural enough in immature work, and indicative of a keen familiarity with the best models, are rather ugly blemishes in the collected work of a highly reputed and rightly distinguished literary artist.

Nor can it be pretended that the drama shows much sense of character. The plot is arbitrary enough. The scene is laid in the sixteenth century. Guido Ferranta, a young man of uncertain parentage, has been summoned to Padua by a mysterious correspondent, who is to tell him the secret of his birth. There he learns from his father's friend, Moranzone, that this same father was foully murdered, having been betrayed to his enemies by the reigning Duke of Padua. The young man is to enter the Duke's service, worm himself into his confidence, and murder him as soon as he receives a sign from Moranzone, but no sooner. Revenge is to be delayed. Unfortunately the youth falls in love with the Duke's wife; his passion is returned; and when the sign—a dagger in a vermilion case—is sent to him, he declines to defile his love with a husband's blood. The Duchess, however, is made of sterner stuff, and, in order to remove all obstacles to her passion, murders her husband in his sleep. The very thought of such brutality is hideous to Guido, who, not unnaturally, shrinks from a woman capable of such treachery. Thereupon the Duchess hands him over to the law, declaring him the slayer of her husband. In the fourth act Guido takes the blame upon himself in open court, and in the fifth is visited by the Duchess in prison, where she takes the poison that had been left for him by a merciful executioner, while he, like Romeo, stabs himself and falls dead upon her lifeless body. There is something here of a genuine attempt to suggest the fierce, uncontrollable passion of the sixteenth century, but the Duchess's maddened changes of mood deprive the drama of the true sublimity of tragedy. Sympathy is estranged from all the characters in turn, and there can be no high drama where there is no human pity.

On the other hand, the play abounds in passages of lurid sensationalism, and is not without stage-strokes of real power and intensity. The thing is overwrought, with the feverish violence of a nightmare, but it is impossible to deny it effect of its own order. The same is true of the poetry. Frequently lax, and even more frequently turgidly melodramatic, it is capable of sustained flights of great rhetorical force, such as are only possible to an imagination of real vigour, wielding a vivid armoury of language which it has yet to bring into subjection. Take such a passage as this, for example:

Now, then, I know you have not loved at all.
Love is the sacrament of life; it sets
Virtue where virtue was not; cleanses men
Of all the vile pollutions of this world:
It is the fire which purges gold from dross,
It is the fan which winnows wheat from chaff,
It is the spring which in some wintry soil
Makes innocence to blossom like a rose.
The days are over when God walked with men
But Love, which is His image, holds His place.
When a man loves a woman, then he knows
God's secret, and the secret of the world.

Remembering that this was written by a young man, no discerning critic, we think, could fail to recognise that such poetry contained elements o great promise, which only needed austere cultiva tion to blossom into something far more significan than its own vigorous, but redundant immaturity.

Truth, February 19. 1908.

The first volume of Messrs. Methuen's uniform edition of the works of Oscar Wilde contains "The Duchess of Padua," a play written about twenty-five years ago, and produced in America in 1891, but not previously published in book form. Only two stage copies are known to exist, and the present edition is based on one in which the author had made many corrections. Some of the other books to be included in this series—which is published under the supervision and by the authority of Wilde's literary executor—have long been out of print, and are now practically unobtainable except in pirated and mutilated copies. The uniform edition is finely printed on hand-made paper. There will be fourteen volumes, price 12s. 6d. each, and the edition is limited to 1,000 sets.

Glasgow Herald. Feb. 24

POETRY, VERSE, AND DRAMA.

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

This drama, now published for the first time, was written in 1882-3, and produced in New York in 1891, the present text being based on a prompt-copy bearing the author's corrections. We are not aware of any authentic source of the story of the play; the argument, indeed, as well as the title, has probably been suggested by Webster's "Duchess of Malfi." Guido Ferranti, being made aware of his real identity and that his father, the Duke of Padua, was murdered by the present holder of that title, enters the usurper's service as a page, with a view to winning revenge. But he is diverted from his purpose by the beauty of the Duchess, the martyr of her brutal husband. In a scene which is a curious medley of Webster, Shakespeare, and the Paola and Francesca episode in Dante, Guido and the Duchess discover that they cannot live without each other. They arrange to flee to Venice; but at the last moment Guido discovers that the Duke, on whose breast, in sign of a magnanimous revenge, he had meant to leave lying a dagger and a letter, has been murdered by the Duchess. He refuses to go, and the Duchess, in rage and despair, accuses him publicly of the crime. He is tried, and found guilty; and when, against the Duchess's will, he is allowed to speak for himself, he breaks silence, not with an accusation against her, but with a declaration of his own guilt. The Duchess, struck to the heart, accuses herself, but no one will listen to her. She visits the prison in disguise, attempts to persuade Guido to escape, and when he refuses takes poison; and an intensely dramatic climax closes with the suicide of Guido over her body as the executioners come in. The play is essentially a stage-play, and many parts of it seem bald and staccato without the action and gesture for which they call. The style, though always limpid and effective, and occasionally very beautiful, is far from original; it is an exquisite symphony of Elizabethan and Victorian echoes; while the dialogue of the soldiers and townsfolk shows the inability of the author—as of nearly all his literary contemporaries—to escape from the Shakespearian convention of quibble and crassness. A curious artistic discord is caused by the fact that the serious duologue with which the play opens is in prose; this, however, was probably remedied in the original manuscript, which, we learn, was stolen from the author's house in 1895. Despite its defects, the play, in its breadth of characterisation, its richness of colouring, its melody of language, and its artistically effective construction, is a notable addition to the somewhat scanty library of nineteenth century English drama, and we trust to have our impressions of it confirmed at no distant date by an adequate stage-performance. We would call special attention to the simple and tasteful beauty of the format, both as regards binding and printing.

8 Darlington Times, Feb. 15. 1908.

"THE DUCHESS OF PADUA."

"The Duchess of Padua: A Play," by Oscar Wilde (Methuen and Co., pp. 210, 12s. 6d. net), is the first volume of a uniform edition of the complete works of Oscar Wilde, which the unfortunate dramatist's friend and literary executor, Mr. Robert Ross, is now editing for Messrs. Methuen and Co. "The Duchess of Padua" is a blank verse play written by Wilde so far back as 1882-3, when he was but in his 27th year. It was produced in New York in 1891, and privately printed for the purposes of copyright, but only two of the twenty copies struck off are now known to exist, and the edition which has been clandestinely circulated in this country and in America is an unauthorised prose re-translation from a German version made by Dr. Max Meyerfield in 1904. To all intents and purposes, then, we have here a new play by Oscar Wilde, and there can be no question of its interest and importance. The story on which it is based is of sixteenth century Italy, but the very full stage directions no less than the dialogue itself go to show that over and above the cultivation of external realism the author intended to give us a representation and a criticism of life. "The Duchess of Padua" has an abundance of the sparkle and cleverness as well as the literary brilliance of the later plays by which Wilde won a foremost place amongst that little band of writers for the stage who in the early eighties lifted English drama out of its former position of helpless dependence on adaptations from the French. Oscar Wilde as a playwright excelled on the literary as well as on the purely dramatic side, and his plays are as enjoyable in book-form as on the stage. In Simone Gesso, the Duke of Padua, he had a character after his own heart, offording unlimited scope for paradox of diction and ideas. Lovers of sparkling epigram will not be disappointed in the old Duke who could say that

> ". . . . popularity
> Is the one insult I have never suffered,"

and that

> Conscience is but the name which cowardice,
> Fleeing from battle, scrawls upon its shield."

The Duke is an excellent piece of characterisation such as has rarely been surpassed in any play of the last quarter of a century. The piece, however, suffers here and there from a certain license of speech and occasional prolixity which Wilde himself saw fit to correct on further reflection by enclosing offending passages within brackets or deleting them in pencil. Mr. Ross professes himself unable to determine whether Wilde wished to exclude these altogether, or merely to cut them out from the acting version. In our opinion the play would gain considerably by the total omission of these passages, which Mr. Ross has printed within square brackets. In all other respects the volume is a notable piece of book-making. It is printed on hand-made paper, and limited to a thousand copies for the United Kingdom and America. The edition is sold only in sets of fourteen volumes, of which five others besides "The Duchess of Padua" are now ready.

Sunday Times Feb. 16.

"The Duchess of Padua."

There is something almost uncanny about the sensation of turning over the pages of what is virtually a new play of Oscar Wilde's, and such one may call "The Duchess of Padua,' which, though written in '82 and produced nine years later in New York, has only just been published as first volume in the very handsome collected edition of its author's works (Methuen, 12s. 6d. net). The play is a gorgeous romantic tragedy closely resembling Webster's work and following with almost slavish fidelity the conventions and the very style of the Jacobean drama. It is interesting and it is beautiful as would be a perfect modern reproduction of an old rood-screen, or a piece of tapestry, or a jewelled cup, or an intaglio, but its æsthetic value is not very much more than that of such imitations, because not original or sincere craftsmanship. For the artificiality of a Webster was unconscious largely and of his time, that of Oscar Wilde is self-conscious and deliberately archaic. Granted, however, that "The Duchess of Padua" is an experiment in an outworn mode, and that its vehicle is mere rhetoric and rhetoric which indulges in the most reckless "conceits," there is no denying that it is a wonderful *tour de force*, and that it tells a story of passion and crime with a warmth of mediæval colouring and a lyrical splendour of phrasing that a Dekker or a Ford might envy. And for those who do not object to the heroine's being at different times four distinct women—a helpless saint who pleads to her tyrant husband the cause of his starving people, a scarlet sinner who commits murder for the sake of love, a revengeful fury who repays her lover's horror of her crime by bringing him to the scaffold, and a penitent of love who tries to save the hero's life and shares his fate—for those, too, who do not mind hearing echoes of the Jacobean poets in every other line, the music of the verse will prove a sheer delight. But the imitation is patent, nay flagrant, and the playwright's borrowing, from Shakespeare are innumerable—from "Hamlet," "Othello," "Julius Cæsar," "As You Like It," "Romeo and Juliet," and even the Sonnets. There are passages that deliberately copy Othello's farewell to his profession and his dying speech, and Juliet's reproachful address to the dead Romeo in the tomb scene, and all through the play the very rhythms of the Bard are used again and again. Only a lengthy quotation can furnish an idea of the quality of the play's verse, or the extent of its indebtedness. Here is a speech of the duchess contemplating suicide. It is not so plainly derivative as other passages:

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 instead,
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 wandering 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 die within thine arms to-night.

One curious trick of amateurishness disfigures the play, and that is the poet's exasperating habit of alternating "thou" and "you," sometimes with [illegible] rhyme; otherwise his literary taste is impeccable.

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Glasgow Herald. 7 Feb: 24

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Manchester Guardian

Feb. 28, 1908

NEW BOOKS.

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA.

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A new "limited" edition, handsome in white buckram, of all Wilde's work opens with his verse tragedy "The Duchess of Padua," written in 1882, played in New York in 1891, and now reprinted from a prompt copy—one of the only two extant—which Wilde's second thoughts had blue-pencilled severely. Mr. Robert Ross, who now edits the play, has given in brackets the lines thus deleted. They show what a sound critic Wilde was of verse, even his own. Thus we find—

> Draw your sword, Guido,
> (And traffic quickly for my life with Death,
> Who is grown greedy of such merchandise).

The Tudor "conceit," which had probably seemed the very rose of poetry in 1882, no doubt struck Wilde as a highly refrigerative piece of ornament in 1891. And there are many cases in which the later revision has cut out banal pieces of figuration like—

> The shipman's needle is not set more sure
> Than I am to the lodestone of your love.

But to make the play anything more than a fine, fervid outburst of young admiration for many things written before it, Wilde, in his adult mind, would have had to delete it all but a few groups of lines here and there. Such a play is really criticism. Wilde's

> Tarry for me;
> Our souls will go together

Daily Graphic.

Feb. 28.

Newcastle Chronicle.

Mar. 4.

Oscar Wilde once asked Ouida what she considered the strong point in her work and the chief secret of its success. Her answer may have been a joke, but it had much conviction and some point in it. "I am the only living English writer," she said, "who knows how two dukes talk when they are by themselves."—"Fortnightly Review."

Manchester Guardian Outlook.

Feb. 22, 1908.

The Duchess of Padua.

THIS dramatic curiosity is described by Mr. Ross, the literary executor of the late Oscar Wilde, as "the prelude to a singularly brilliant and, if the last five years are omitted, a very happy life." Wilde was certainly right in saying, when the idea of dedicating it to an old friend was in his mind, "It is unworthy of her and unworthy of me." *The Duchess of Padua* (Methuen, 12s. 6d. net) was written in 1882, and never published until now, though in 1891 its author assisted at a production of the play in New York, when he struck out, one gathers, a number of scattered passages which he found too full of immature bombast, too commonplace, or too dull. These are given between brackets in the present edition, and one has Wilde's first play in all its interesting mediocrity. For there is really nothing impressive in this blank-verse tragedy after the more lurid Elizabethan manner. It is full of banalities of expression and thought which it is highly curious to find proceeding even from the early period of the most fastidious spirit in modern letters; and the violent story of revenge and guilty passion and blood which it tells has none of the illusion of art. It reads like an experiment begun idly and finished carelessly by a man a good deal less clever and less of an artist than Wilde. The volume, however, takes its proper place as the first of the twelve of Mr. Ross's uniform edition of the author's works.

Feb. 27. 1908

Evening Standard and St. James's

THE ELIZABETHAN MODEL.

"The Duchess of Padua." A Play. By Oscar Wilde. Methuen.

This is a volume of a collected edition of the works of Oscar Wilde, limited to one thousand copies. We gather from an accompanying prospectus that eleven volumes are now published, and that three more will probably complete the set. The specimen before us is an admirable piece of bookmaking, printed with bold type on a dignified page, and bound in white buckram chastely gilded. Subscribers to the edition will have a series of what the bibliopole calls very pretty books.

A fairly large experience of books and their bindings has led us to distrust white gilt. Many ineptitudes are so covered. Minor verse, distinguished by fatuity of thought and disregard of rhythm, often strives to conceal its sins under this robe of white. Between the lovely garment and mental flabbiness there would seem to be some subtle connection.

"The Duchess of Padua," however, has done something to cure us of such suspicions. Here is no flabbiness either of thought or expression. Not a great play, it is

"Times" Literary Supplement.

"THE DUCHESS OF PADUA."

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA: A Play. By OSCAR WILDE.

Wing's have
original stock
in London at

Spring
Pai
Pap

Free Estimates
and for colour

Even the chea
artistic charm

Visit
the Model
House.

Near Oxford Circus.

THE FUTURE OF THE "TIMES."

To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian.

Sir,—As a number of statements have appeared in the press relating to the sale of the "Times," we think it desirable, in the interest of the proprietors, to explain what the exact position of affairs is.

We are the solicitors for the plaintiffs in an action of Sibley v. Walter, which is an action for the winding-up of the partnership existing between the proprietors of the "Times" newspaper.

war vessels at anchor in the roads of Casablanca. The French Government, whose duty it is to preserve the security of the coast towns, could not permit any attempt on the part of the Hafidists to lay siege to the port. On the other hand, in resisting such an attack their protection of Abd-el-Aziz, despite their professions of neutrality, would at once assume the character of active intervention in the internal revolution.

REPORTED FRENCH REVERSES.

Another Tangier message says:—According to reports received here from Casa Blanca the Moors have made a furious attack on the French, who have been driven back to within four miles of the town. The Settat column, it is added, has been cut off by Mulai Hafid's mahalla. It is stated that reinforcements are being landed from the French and Spanish warships for the defence of the town.

30 Manchester Guardian Outlook. Feb: 22, 1908.

Feb: 21 1908

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The Tudor "conceit," which had probably seemed the very rose of poetry in 1882, no doubt struck Wilde as a highly refrigerative piece of ornament in 1891. And there are many cases in which the later revision has cut out banal pieces of figuration like—

> The shipman's needle is not set more sure
> Than I am to the lodestone of your love.

But to make the play anything more than a fine, fervid outburst of young admiration for many things written before it, Wilde, in his adult mind, would have had to delete it all but a few groups of lines here and there. Such a play is really criticism. Wilde's

> Tarry for me;
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is a delighted criticism of the older

> Tarry, sweet soul, for mine, then fly abreast.

Lady Macbeth says after the murder that "A little water clears us of this deed," and later, "Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" And Wilde's Duchess, having killed her husband, comments—

> I did not think he would have bled so much,
> But I can wash my hands in water after.

Dogberry counsels the watch against thief-taking, for "they that touch pitch will be defiled," and Wilde's comic man says that, since the dead Duke had been wicked, the murderer "should not have touched him; if one meddles with wicked people, one is like to be tainted with their wickedness." People write so in youth, even if they have a genius growing in them such as came to full growth in Wilde's finest comedy. It is not plagiarism; it is rather that the world presented by imaginative art is then so much more importunately actual and moving than "real life" that its re-representation seems the only possible object of artistic effort; and though the poetry thus written is derivative, it often has a genuine heat of passion for its originals, and so it is good criticism and good illustrator's work, though as creation it is two degrees removed from reality. "The Duchess of Padua" is a revel of literary appreciations—of the terrific "curtains" of Victor Hugo, the sympathetic thunder of "King Lear," the clotted bloodiness of Webster, the Shaksperean contrast of high imaginative passion with super-stolid, super-literal clowning,—though Wilde can hardly have really enjoyed Shakspere's clowns, so wooden and unlaughable are his own; that they should ever have come from the writer who also wrote "The Importance of Being Earnest" confirms Sophocles's observation, since adopted in Lancashire, that "there's nowt so queer as folk." We wish it might be acted here. Though Maeterlinck and Ibsen have led European playgoers to revise their definition of "action" as the proper subject of drama, and to conceive it less as the external action of physical violences, or at least changes, and more as the action of minds powerfully affected and swiftly abandoning one position and taking another, there is still a good kick left in the tragedy of strong melodramatic structure—that is, of all the Greeks, all the Elizabethans, the great Spaniards, and the great Frenchmen from Racine to Hugo; and even when he wrote "The Duchess of Padua" Wilde had already—we should guess, though it is hard to say from reading only—the characteristic imagination of the dramatist, who imagines with the eye and ear together. Details like the design of a dress by which a character is to be identified at his entrance are treated with anything but the usual profound indifference of young poetic dramatists to the question how much one can see from the back of the pit, and the stage directions suggest scenes of Romanesque architecture and Renaissance ornament which seem quite practicable and should be of great beauty.

There are to be some fourteen volumes in the edition.

C. E. M.

The Duchess of Padua.

THIS dramatic curiosity is described by Mr. Ross, the literary executor of the late Oscar Wilde, as "the prelude to a singularly brilliant and, if the last five years are omitted, a very happy life." Wilde was certainly right in saying, when the idea of dedicating it to an old friend was in his mind, "It is unworthy of her and unworthy of me." *The Duchess of Padua* (Methuen, 12s. 6d. net) was written in 1882, and never published until now, though in 1891 its author assisted at a production of the play in New York when he struck out, one gathers, a number of scattered passages which he found too full of immature bombast, too commonplace, or too dull. These are given between brackets in the present edition and one has Wilde's first play in all its interesting mediocrity. For there is really nothing impressive in this blank-verse tragedy after the more lurid Elizabethan manner. It is full of banalities of expression and thought which it is highly curious to find proceeding even from the early period of the most fastidious spirit in modern letters; and the violent story of revenge and guilty passion and blood which it tells has none of the illusion of art. It reads like an experiment begun idly and finished carelessly by a man a good deal less clever and less of an artist than Wilde. The volume, however, takes its proper place as the first of the twelve of Mr. Ross's uniform edition of the author's works.

Daily Graphic. Feb: 28.

Newcastle Chronicle.

Mar. 4.

Oscar Wilde once asked Ouida what she considered the strong point in her work and the chief secret of its success. Her answer may have been a joke, but it had much conviction and some point in it. "I am the only living English writer," she said, "who knows how two dukes talk when they are by themselves."—"Fortnightly Review."

k. Feb. 22, 1908.

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Feb. 27. 1908

Evening Standard and St. James's

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"The Duchess of Padua." A Play. By Oscar Wilde. Methuen.

This is a volume of a collected edition of the works of Oscar Wilde, limited to one thousand copies. We gather from an accompanying prospectus that eleven volumes are now published, and that three more will probably complete the set. The specimen before us is an admirable piece of bookmaking, printed with bold type on a dignified page, and bound in white buckram chastely gilded. Subscribers to the edition will have a series of what the bibliopole calls very pretty books.

A fairly large experience of books and their bindings has led us to distrust white gilt. Many ineptitudes are so covered. Minor verse, distinguished by fatuity of thought and disregard of rhythm, often strives to conceal its sins under this robe of white. Between the lovely garment and mental flabbiness there would seem to be some subtle connection.

"The Duchess of Padua," however, has done something to cure us of such suspicions. Here is no flabbiness either of thought or expression. Not a great play, it is assuredly a play full of strength and colour and drama. It is surprising the world should know so little of it; for many things masquerading as plays have been written in recent days, read and praised, even produced in theatres and applauded there, which cannot boast half the quality which distinguishes this echo of the Elizabethans.

The history of "The Duchess of Padua" is curious. It was written in 1882 and finished in the early part of 1883. In 1891 it was performed in New York having first been offered to Miss Mary Anderson, who, to the author's great disappointment, could not see her way to appearing in it. Twenty copies, the present editor (Mr. Ross) tells us, were printed for private circulation and use in the New York theatre. One of only two copies known to exist contains the author's corrections, and on it this edition is based. The original manuscript, with other unpublished works, was stolen from Mr. Wilde's house in 1895. In 1904 the play was translated into German, and from the German an unauthorised English prose translation was made, and has been sold to the public. Messrs. Methuen have therefore justification for describing the play as "new." To all purpose it is new.

We do not regret never having read the translated prose version. Nor can we understand how the play could have been tolerable in such a guise. The predominant feature of the tragedy, as Mr. Wilde wrote it, and as we now read it here, is the dramatic fluidity of its verse, which compels the attention, and never allows it to stray until the action has been whirled along from the beginning to the tragic close.

The plot is simple. Guido Ferranti, son of an unknown father, has come to Padua in answer to a mysterious communication, in order that he may learn the secret of his birth. There he hears that a nobleman was his lost parent—that "great Duke Lorenzo" who was "on the public scaffold murdered" after having been betrayed by a friend. On that friend, the Duke of Padua, Guido proposes to take vengeance, and for the purpose enters the Duke's household. But Beatrice, the Duchess, is fair, and Guido loves her, she him. He hesitates in his project, being unwilling to unite himself and his lady by murder. The vengeance his father would wish him to take, he thinks, is to let the villain escape. Beatrice, however, kills her husband, and her lover is caught with the blood-stained dagger in his hand. As he has told Beatrice to leave him, in horror of her deed, she turns upon him like a savage creature, and sits in the court while he is condemned, taking the murder on his own shoulders. Love brings them together again ere death parts them.

The changes of feeling and twists of purpose which characterise the working of the plot cannot be followed here. Occasionally they strike one as too far removed from nature, though their dramatic value is generally high. The point we would insist on is this same dramatic effectiveness. The energy with which the plot is conducted never flags, but hurries the reader—and we are thinking now of the readableness of the play, not of its stage possibilities—from episode to episode in a rush of excitement. That there is crudeness in the workmanship cannot but be acknowledged. Some of it betrays the unpractised hand. A generation which has learnt to regard "asides" and the reading of letters as wretched contrivances might call the play technically ill-made. We can fancy an Elizabethan audience clapping it loudly.

Elizabethan in spirit and conception it undoubtedly is. The very tone of many of the lines is Elizabethan. Some indeed are so Elizabethan as to seem borrowed from men like Ford and Webster. When, for example, Beatrice asks:—

"Am I not Duchess here in Padua?"

she speaks with the very accent of the Duchess of Malfi:—

"I am Duchess of Malfi still"—

and her character throughout is a character familiar in the minor Elizabethans. The author must have been saturated with those robustious poets. He could not help imitating them. We do not think he knew how close he was keeping to his exemplars. He spoke with their voice because their language was in his ears.

What is his own is the capacity for suggesting rich, heavy colour. One is conscious of gorgeous tints on every page. The stage directions hint at magnificence, but they are less powerful in casting this peculiar spell than the laden verse. The very blood which drips from the murdered Duke is made a contribution to the colour scheme. The whole play is deluged in purple and Renaissance hues. We hasten to add, lest this should appear to hint at oppressive splendours, that the tragic beauty of the scheme keeps the thing fresh and virile.

With all its crudities and juvenilities, "The Duchess of Padua" is a fine play. We have enjoyed the reading, and, could we get into a pre-Ibsenitish frame of mind (which is perhaps impossible), we have no doubt we should enjoy the acting too.

"Times" Literary Supplement.

"THE DUCHESS OF PADUA."

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA: A Play. By OSCAR WILDE. (Methuen, 12s. 6d. net.)

This is the first volume of the new collected edition of the works of Oscar Wilde. If there were nothing better to follow, we should hesitate about the need for the enterprise. In one way, the publication of this tragedy will benefit the world and the fame of the author, since it will (at least we hope it will) sweep away the prose translation from a translation into German, which has hitherto been masquerading as the genuine thing. We have now for the first time the original text, though here and there it seems to be corrupt, and misprints are not wanting. But those who look to this play for any new proof of Wilde's genius, or indeed for any more than a faint suggestion of a few elements in that genius, will look in vain. *The Duchess of Padua* is an early work; and of all the works of an author whose originality had its root in high-handed borrowing it is the most, and the least masterfully, imitative. A literary artist exceptionally adroit by nature and finely trained by effort, Wilde mastered forms easily, and used them for his own purpose, which was generally for the expression, by one or another kind of brilliant perversion, of ideas which, in their turn, were brilliant perversions of other people's ideas. They were often but "pot-shots" at truth, if we dare call them so; and the surprising correctness with which they were aimed was possibly of less moment to the gay marksman than the style in which they were fired and his determination to be seen shooting in the direction on which the rest of the world had turned its back. There is nothing of this in *The Duchess of Padua*. It stops short at the imitation of a form. True, the wicked Duke, in the middle of a Polonian address of counsel to a young man, remarks:—

> Have prudence; in your dealings with the world
> Be not too hasty; act on the second thought,
> First impulses are generally good.

But such sparks—heralding the showers of rockets to come—are rare. For the present the author is content to imitate as well as he can.

The first impression gained is that he imitates remarkably well. *The Duchess of Padua* is an Elizabethan, or rather a Jacobean, tragedy in five acts of blank verse and prose. On the face of it, the scheme is complete. Here is a fable of blood and poison, murder and suicide, high love and savage hate. Here is a mad scene, and here is "comic relief" with a second this and a third that as wisely foolish as could be, and a Mistress Lucy to do for Juliet's nurse. Only in the act-endings, which are, all but one, worked up to the "situations" unknown to the platform stage, does the scheme reveal at a glance its actual date. Much of the language, too, is even deceptively like (we need hardly say that it is all exceedingly clever). When the duchess, who has murdered her husband and taken poison, is descanting on the "stark winding-sheet" and the grave, she remarks:

> I think there are no roses in the grave,
> Or if there are, they all are withered now
> Since my Lord went there.

This, too, is quite in the period:—

> It would be a thing
> So terrible that the amazed stars
> Would fall from heaven, and the palsied moon
> Be in her sphere eclipsed, and the great sun—

but we need not complete what every one can complete for themselves. To take a longer passage:—

> O thou eternal heaven!
> If there is aught of nature in my soul,
> Of gentle pity, or fond kindliness,
> Wither it up, blast it, bring it to nothing,
> Or if thou wilt not, then will I myself
> Cut pity with a sharp knife from my heart
> And strangle mercy in her sleep at night
> Lest she speak to me. Vengeance there I have it.
> Be thou my comrade and my bedfellow,
> Sit by my side, ride to the chase with me,
> When I am weary sing me pretty songs,
> When I am light o' heart, make jest with me,
> And when I dream, whisper into my ear
> The dreadful secret of a father's murder—
> Did I say murder? (*Draws his dagger.*)
> Listen, thou terrible God!
> Thou God that punishest all broken oaths,
> And bid some angel write this oath in fire,
> That from this hour—

and so to the oath.

It is a pity that, on further examination, the likeness proves here and there too strong. When a woman who has murdered an old man says:—"I did not think he would have bled so much"; when a dying woman cries:—

> Are there no rivers left in Italy
> That you will not fetch me one cup of water
> To quench this fire?

when we read of "the cold meats of my husband's funeral feast," and find the line:—"You are my lady, and you are my love!" we cannot talk of adroitness in imitation. Nor can we with regard to the conduct of the fable, which has its source and inspiration in a desire to imitate. Guido Ferranti is to murder the Duke of Padua, who murdered his father. The deed might be done at any time after the first act, but it must be delayed, partly that he may show a Hamlet-like irresolution, and partly that he and the Duchess may fall in love with each other. Then the Duchess murders the Duke, to make way for Guido, and turns Lady Macbeth for a time. Guido, instead of welcoming the deed, is virtuously indignant, and casts off the Duchess, who thereupon proclaims him the Duke's assassin. So we come to a *Merchant of Venice* trial, in which things sway to and fro and each party mimics the other's expressions of triumph. This act is kept going by the uncertainty—achieved at the cost of any clear statement of motives—whether Guido will tell the truth or not; and his silence leads us to the dungeon where the lovers die as like Romeo and Juliet as may be. Wilde had a wonderful instinct for what would be effective on the stage, and we can imagine that, well acted, the tragedy would be perfectly convincing at the moment—but for one thing.

Over-anxious, perhaps, to make us sympathize with his lovers, the author has been afraid to leave it to the story to explain them. They are constantly looking at themselves from outside, far too often assuring us out of their own mouths that they are "boyish," "girlish," and "young." They forget themselves, indeed, far enough to make love beautifully; but they are a terribly self-conscious young couple. They pity themselves so much that we can hardly pity them; and they become almost irritating in their conscious simplicity, which shows itself chiefly in a reiterated trick of beginning their remarks with "I think that" or "I did not think that." This is partly due to the inexperienced efforts of youth; it means also that the author was not convinced of his characters himself, and had not the skill to hide it. He saw them from the outside only—just as he saw both the scene and the Duchess from the outside only when he made her, in a moment of agony, call the Madonna's attention to the fact that the artist of her picture had represented her with a "sweet pale face bending between the little angel heads."

The publication of this volume makes the world the richer by a good deal of beautiful verse and some cleverly-managed scenes. It does not add to our stock of great plays. Happily, there are better things to come—things which Oscar Wilde alone could have given us.

Manchester Guardian

Feb: 21 1908

NEW BOOKS.

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA.

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA. A Play. By Oscar Wilde. London: Methuen and Co. Pp. 210. 12s. 6d. net.

A new "limited" edition, handsome in white buckram, of all Wilde's work opens with his verse tragedy "The Duchess of Padua," written in 1882, played in New York in 1891, and now reprinted from a prompt copy—one of the only two extant—which Wilde's second thoughts had blue-pencilled severely. Mr. Robert Ross, who now edits the play, has given in brackets the lines thus deleted. They show what a sound critic Wilde was of verse, even his own. Thus we find—

> Draw your sword, Guido,
> (And traffic quickly for my life with Death,
> Who is grown greedy of such merchandise).

The Tudor "conceit," which had probably seemed the very rose of poetry in 1882, no doubt struck Wilde as a highly refrigerative piece of ornament in 1891. And there are many cases in which the later revision has cut out banal pieces of figuration like—

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But to make the play anything more than a fine, fervid outburst of young admiration for many things written before it, Wilde, in his adult mind, would have had to delete it all but a few groups of lines here and there. Such a play is really criticism. Wilde's

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C. E. M.

n Outlook. Feb. 22, 1908.

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Evening Standard and St. James's "T

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> First impulses are generally good.

But such sparks—heralding the showers of rockets to come—are rare. For the present the author is content to imitate as well as he can.

The first impression gained is that he imitates remarkably well. *The Duchess of Padua* is an Elizabethan, or rather a Jacobean, tragedy in five acts of blank verse and prose. On the face of it, the scheme is complete. Here is a fable of blood and poison, murder and suicide, high love and savage hate. Here is a mad scene, and here is "comic relief" with a second this and a third that as wisely foolish as could be, and a Mistress Lucy to do for Juliet's nurse. Only in the act-endings, which are, all but one, worked up to the "situations" unknown to the platform stage, does the scheme reveal at a glance its actual date. Much of the language, too, is even deceptively like (we need hardly say that it is all exceedingly clever). When the duchess, who has murdered her husband and taken poison, is descanting on the "stark winding-sheet" and the grave, she remarks:

> I think there are no roses in the grave,
> Or if there are, they all are withered now
> Since my Lord went there.

This, too, is quite in the period:—

> It would be a thing
> So terrible that the amazed stars
> Would fall from heaven, and the palsied moon
> Be in her sphere eclipsed, and the great sun—

but we need not complete what every one can complete for themselves. To take a longer passage:—

> O thou eternal heaven!
> If there is aught of nature in my soul,
> Of gentle pity, or fond kindliness,
> Wither it up, blast it, bring it to nothing,
> Or if thou wilt not, then will I myself
> Cut pity with a sharp knife from my heart
> And strangle mercy in her sleep at night
> Lest she speak to me. Vengeance there I have it.
> Be thou my comrade and my bedfellow,
> Sit by my side, ride to the chase with me,
> When I am weary sing me pretty songs,
> When I am light o' heart, make jest with me,
> And when I dream, whisper into my ear
> The dreadful secret of a father's murder—
> Did I say murder? (*Draws his dagger.*)
> Listen, thou terrible God!
> Thou God that punishest all broken oaths,
> And bid some angel write this oath in fire,
> That from this hour—

and so to the oath.

It is a pity that, on further examination, the likeness proves here and there too strong. When a woman who has murdered an old man says:—"I did not think he would have bled so much"; when a dying woman cries:—

> Are there no rivers left in Italy
> That you will not fetch me one cup of water
> To quench this fire?

when we read of "the cold meats of my husband's funeral feast," and find the line:—"You are my lady, and you are my love!" we cannot talk of adroitness in imitation. Nor can we with regard to the conduct of the fable, which has its source and inspiration in a desire to imitate. Guido Ferranti is to murder the Duke of Padua, who murdered his father. The deed might be done at any time after the first act, but it must be delayed, partly that he may show a Hamlet-like irresolution, and partly that he and the Duchess may fall in love with each other. Then the Duchess murders the Duke, to make way for Guido, and turns Lady Macbeth for a time. Guido, instead of welcoming the deed, is virtuously indignant, and casts off the Duchess, who thereupon proclaims him the Duke's assassin. So we come to a *Merchant of Venice* trial, in which things sway to and fro and each party mimics the other's expressions of triumph. This act is kept going by the uncertainty—achieved at the cost of any clear statement of motives—whether Guido will tell the truth or not; and his silence leads us to the dungeon where the lovers die as like Romeo and Juliet as may be. Wilde had a wonderful instinct for what would be effective on the stage, and we can imagine that, well acted, the tragedy would be perfectly convincing at the moment—but for one thing.

Over-anxious, perhaps, to make us sympathize with his lovers, the author has been afraid to leave it to the story to explain them. They are constantly looking at themselves from outside, far too often assuring us out of their own mouths that they are "boyish," "girlish," and "young." They forget themselves, indeed, far enough to make love beautifully; but they are a terribly self-conscious young couple. They pity themselves so much that we can hardly pity them; and they become almost irritating in their conscious simplicity, which shows itself chiefly in a reiterated trick of beginning their remarks with "I think that" or "I did not think that." This is partly due to the inexperienced efforts of youth; it means also that the author was not convinced of his characters himself, and had not the skill to hide it. He saw them from the outside only—just as he saw both the scene and the Duchess from the outside only when he made her, in a moment of agony, call the Madonna's attention to the fact that the artist of her picture had represented her with a "sweet pale face bending between the little angel heads."

The publication of this volume makes the world the richer by a good deal of beautiful verse and some cleverly-managed scenes. It does not add to our stock of great plays. Happily, there are better things to come—things which Oscar Wilde alone could have given us.

Daily Courier Feb. 29.
Liverpool.

POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE.

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March 1. 1908

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* * *

THE WORLD OF BOOK

Oscar Wilde as Playwright and Poet.

It is rather a strange coincidence that twice within a century Continental opinion, which so rarely waxes fervent over English men of letters, should have chosen as an object of its enthusiasm an author who in his own country was under a cloud. From the very first Byron has been rated far higher by his foreign than by his English critics, and that is not too much to say that he is the only English poet of modern times who has won an enduring European reputation. Oscar Wilde's vogue on the Continent cannot be compared with his, but it is a fact that while the tragedy of this unhappy author's life was still being played out audiences in Germany and France were welcoming with delight his drama of "Salome," and [illegible] Egger, as [illegible] by the nobility and [illegible] [illegible] late of the London Metropolitan Police [illegible] Harley, International Detective, Condition assured.—Apply, Box 142, SUNDAY TIMES.

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DISTINGUISHED AMATEURS AT THE LEAGUE OF MERCY MATINÉE AT THE SCALA

Above is a reproduction of the company of actors and actresses who gave a most successful rendering of Oscar Wilde's comedy, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in aid of the League of Mercy. The names, reading from left to right, are: Standing—Miss Juliet Hardinge, Mrs. C. Enthoven, Mr. E. Herbert Wyand, Miss Ella Harman, Mr. Ernest Thesiger; seated—Mr. Noel Adams, the Hon. Stephen Powys, the Hon. Mary Thesiger, and Mr. Auckland Branwell. The comedy was preceded by a performance of *Under the Greenwood Tree*, produced at the Scala on a similar occasion more than a year ago

himself in the mirror of the stream. It is true that he is an artist always, that he adorns what he touches, whether borrowed or not. But he is too pre-occupied with his own feelings, and often enough he is too lavish with his colour. He will insist on gilding the lily and painting the rose. So orchids please him better than natural flowers; sin is more interesting because more variegated than innocence. His cult of sensations and his incapacity for getting away from himself give his poems an appearance of artificiality, and it would almost seem as if some rough experience had been necessary to remind him of the existence and sufferings of his fellow-men. At any rate, it is significant that the one poem in which he rises to his supreme height of passion is also that in which he forgets himself in the cause of another—"The Ballad of Reading Gaol." That piece, if perhaps that alone, will serve to keep Oscar Wilde's memory green with posterity. Otherwise, though an artist in grain, he cannot be reckoned an artist of the first rank.

apr 5

CORRESPONDENCE.

OSCAR WILDE'S WORKS.

To the Editor of THE SUNDAY TIMES.

Sir,—Oscar Wilde says somewhere in "Intentions" that "it is only the Philistine who seeks to estimate a personality by the vulgar test of production," and I may possibly fall under this charge when I question your statement in THE SUNDAY TIMES that Oscar Wilde's vogue on the Continent cannot be compared with Byron's.

Practically everything that Wilde ever wrote (and a good deal that has been falsely attributed to him) has been translated and published in nearly every European country, and his better-known works, such as "Salome" and the "Ballad of Reading Gaol," have been issued in every conceivable language, including Russian, Modern Greek, Czech, and Yiddish. I can confidently challenge anyone to produce such a list of Byron's translations as I can produce of Wilde's.

May I refer to one other point in your notice of the new edition of Wilde's works? You state that [illegible] t a single pretty image or a happy turn [illegible] in his Newdigate Prize Poem which [illegible] incorporate into later work." I know [illegible] passages you refer to, and I maintain, [illegible] prepared to prove, if necessary, that [illegible] opposite is the case. I have carefully [illegible] these parallel passages and in every case [illegible] m poems published before 1878, and in [illegible] tance is a line from "Ravenna" repeated [illegible] written at a date subsequent to the [illegible] rize Poem.—Yours, etc.,

[illegible] are-road, W. STUART MASON.

[illegible]bridge Chronicle, March 7, 1908.

[illegible] UCHESS OF PADUA. By Oscar [illegible]e. (Methuen).

[illegible] early work of Oscar Wilde's was [illegible]ed in 1882 and completed in the [illegible] year. It bears many evidences of [illegible]y and promise of greater work to [illegible] must have been written after a [illegible] debauch of Shakespeare, Webster, [illegible] nd Co., particularly Webster; it [illegible] often verbally reminiscent, and it [illegible] a fairly good example of the [illegible]n school of "battle, murder, and [illegible]ath." If the wholly unnecessary [illegible] undramatic Act IV. were omitted it [illegible] ove striking on the stage, if well [illegible] haps some of our local "societies" [illegible]? The experiment would be inter-[illegible] he blank verse is often faulty, but [illegible] as both in thought and in expres-[illegible] to a high level. But it is only a [illegible] note.

Daily Courier Feb: 28.
Liverpool.

POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE.

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FIRST CITIZEN: This is a strange day for Padua, is it not?—the Duke being dead.

SECOND CITIZEN: I tell you, neighbour Dominick, I have not known such a day since the last Duke died: and if you believe me not I am no true man.

FIRST CITIZEN: They will try him first, and sentence him afterwards, will they not, neighbour Anthony?

SECOND CITIZEN: Nay, for he might 'scape his punishment then; but they will condemn him first, so that he gets his deserts, and give him a trial afterwards, so that no injustice is done.

FIRST CITIZEN: Well, well, it will go hard with him I doubt not.

SECOND CITIZEN: Surely it is a grievous thing to shed a Duke's blood.

THIRD CITIZEN: They say a Duke has blue blood.

SECOND CITIZEN: I think our Duke's blood was black, like his soul.

THIRD CITIZEN: What think you of this young man who stuck the knife into the Duke?

SECOND CITIZEN: Why, that he is a well-behaved, and a well-meaning and a well-favoured lad, and yet wicked in that he killed the Duke.

THIRD CITIZEN: 'Twas the first time he did it: may be the law will not be hard on him, as he did not do it before.

SECOND CITIZEN: True.

But in spite of the occurrence of cool recollections of this sort, it must not be supposed that the tragedy is either (on the one hand) a piece of patient sampler-work, or (on the other) a mere turn of strength, a bit of artistic "blague." Cries and epithets of a searching newness ring out from it; its colour is personal and modern; and the implicit criticism of life which runs through it contains things undreamed of by Ford's or Webster's philosophy. And although the music of the verse is too deliberate and cautious (or perhaps attacks an ear too well prepared?) to seem properly varied and alive, yet the due variations are none the less there, perfectly interlocking, played with the utmost nicety, and giving constant assurance of a hot wit moving nimbly to and fro beneath them.

Sit down here,
A little lower than me; yes, just so, sweet,
That I may run my fingers through your hair,
And see your face turn upwards like a flower
To meet my kiss.
Have you not sometimes noted,
When we unlock some long-disused room
With heavy dust and soiling mildew filled,
Where never foot of man has come for years,
And from the windows take the rusty bar,
And fling the broken shutters to the air,
And let the bright sun in, how the good sun
Turns every grimy particle of dust
Into a little thing of dancing gold?
Guido, my heart is that long-empty room.
But you have let love in, and with its gold
Gilded all life.

Nor is there ever (as it might seem there almost inevitably must be in such an exercise) any stopping up of metrical holes with juicy adjectives: the bones of the periods show through (dainty bones, of course, but still very feat and serviceable) and firmly control the flesh-curves; and even the passages which Wilde marked for excision (such as those square-bracketed in the following quotation) would almost always have received the approval of any less exacting critic),—of any other critic in the world, that is to say, than Wilde himself:—

[You would have said so had you seen that mist:
And then the air rained blood] and then he groaned,
And then he groaned no more! I only heard
The dripping of the blood upon the floor.

Profoundly interesting as it is in its relation to the poems which preceded it and the plays which it preceded, "The Duchess of Padua" has thus, it will be seen, a clear intrinsic value also, a distinction great enough to establish its author, even had he done nothing different or better, as a dramatist and poet of high and curious rank. It fails, indeed, to establish him as a dramatic poet. The excellent joinery of its thrills and curtains proves the presence of the craftsman who was ultimately to contrive that elaborate nest of jewel-cases, "The Importance of being Earnest"; the great thunders of Guido and the rich speeches of the Duchess prove the presence of the lyrist who at once weakened and sweetened the prose of "De Profundis"; but the two artists are never more than yoke-fellows, they never become one and indivisible. The drama is never of the sort that can only be made manifest by poetry; the poetry, tearing passions to rags so magnificently, is never of the kind that tears the last rag from a passion and leaves it naked. The visible lightnings and the vocal thunders often coincide very convincingly; but they have always been forged separately, the product of different forces.

But that defect is, of course, by no means fatal to "The Duchess of Padua's" modern actability. Vocal thunders alone were often quite good enough for Shakespeare (that incorrigible rhetorician) and for Shakespeare's platform-stage-surrounding audience; and the lightnings and visible splendours which Wilde (shrewdly mindful of the shrunk proscenium) is always careful to pile up in addition, would clearly ravish a public in love with Hamlet-cum-Pantomime and Mr. Stephen Phillips. "A large corridor in the Ducal Palace: a window looks out on a view of Padua by moonlight: a staircase leads up to a door with a portiere of crimson velvet, with the Duke's arms embroidered in gold on it: on the lowest step of the staircase a figure draped in black is sitting: the hall is lit by an iron cresset filled with burning tow: thunder and lightning outside; the time is night." It is impossible to conceive Mr. Tree perusing stage-directions of that kind without a momentous watering of the teeth. . . .

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Tatler.
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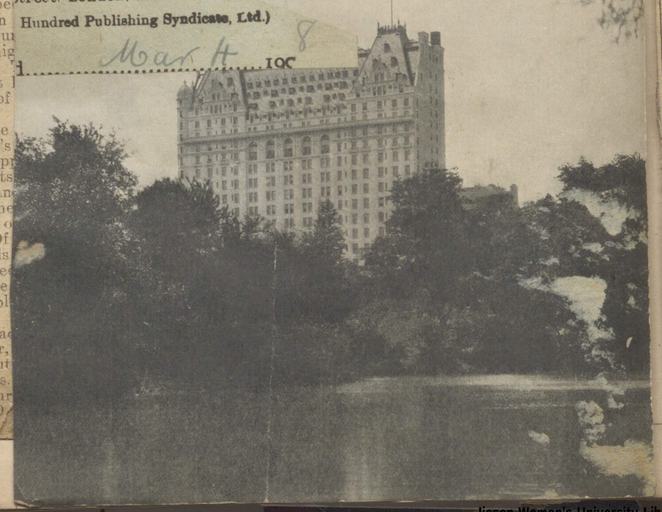

THE WORLD OF BOOK

Oscar Wilde as Playwright and Poet.

It is rather a strange coincidence that twice within a century Continental opinion, which so rarely waxes fervent over English men of letters, should have chosen as an object of its enthusiasm an author who in his own country was under a cloud. From the very first Byron has been rated far higher by his foreign than by his English critics, and that is not too much to say that he is the only English poet of modern times who has won an enduring European reputation. Oscar Wilde's vogue on the Continent cannot be compared with his, but it is a fact that while the tragedy of this unhappy author's life was still being played out audiences in Germany and France were welcoming with delight his drama of "Salome," a work which Europe employed by the nobility and gentry: in regard to all Investigator, late of the London Metropolitan Police assured.—Apply, Box 142, SUNDAY TIMES.

Hartley, International Detective, Condendon House Note and Allowers: 5/- sample parcels upwards; satisfaction guaranteed, or money returned: cheapest in the trade.—Davis, 52, High-pavement, Nottingham. m3

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LADIES' TAILORING AND DRESSMAKING. Orders Dresses with Prices sent free on application. EDWARD PHILLIPS, Ladies' Tailor, 50a, Orchard-st., W.

The Ladies' Dress Agency, 239, Fulham-road, South Kensington, conducted by Miss Malcolm, where ladies can obtain genuine bargains in smart gowns only slightly worn: Evening Dresses, silk lined, from 15/-. a12

Tailed Ladies' Elegant Gowns, every description: best Paris and London makers: silk-lined, as new, £2 2s. to £10 10s. Ball and Tea Gowns a speciality. Sunny Models from £3 3s.—Lisle 61, Upper Gloucester-place, Baker-street, W. (10.30 to 6; Saturday, 1.) m3

To all who Travel.—Benson's is the Cheapest and Best House for all kinds of Trunks for India, Africa, and all parts of the world: Ladies' Dress Baskets; Cane Trunks, Hat Cases, Gladstone and Kit Bags, Cabin Requisition Trunks; Pilot Bags—3, 4, 5 and 25/-. Tottenham-court-road. Only address. m10

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Lovely Hand-painted and Ribbon-worked Buttons, from 1½d. each; samples willingly.—O. Madame, 504, Edgware-road, W. m31

Madame Dale, Ladies' Dress Agent, 115, Edgware-rd., W. (1st Floor): Costumes, Day and Evening Gowns, Blouses, and Millinery; smart Gowns bought and sold on commission; no booking fee.—10 to 6.30; Saturday, 1. m29

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Irish Linen Remnants, Tablecloth Lengths, Pillow Linen, &c., 5s. and 10s. parcels. Splendid value. Post free.—Russell, Woodstock-road, Belfast. a12

Lady going abroad wishes to strongly recommend Dressmaker, who has just completed outfit; models copied; renovations most successful.—Madame Lyndon, 6, Sterling-st., Montpelier-sq., Brompton-rd., S.W. m29

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himself in the mirror of the stream. It is true that he is an artist always, that he adorns what he touches, whether borrowed or not. But he is too pre-occupied with his own feelings, and often enough he is too lavish with his colour. He will insist on gilding the lily and painting the rose. So orchids please him better than natural flowers; sin is more interesting because more variegated than innocence. His cult of sensations and his incapacity for getting away from himself give his poems an appearance of artificiality, and it would almost seem as if some rough experience had been necessary to remind him of the existence and sufferings of his fellow-men. At any rate, it is significant that the one poem in which he rises to his supreme height of passion is also that in which he forgets himself in the cause of another—"The Ballad of Reading Gaol." That piece, if perhaps that alone, will serve to keep Oscar Wilde's memory green with posterity. Otherwise, though an artist in grain, he cannot be reckoned an artist of the first rank.

apr 5

CORRESPONDENCE.

OSCAR WILDE'S WORKS.

To the Editor of THE SUNDAY TIMES.

Sir,—Oscar Wilde says somewhere in "Intentions" that "it is only the Philistine who seeks to estimate a personality by the vulgar test of production," and I may possibly fall under this charge when I question your statement in THE SUNDAY TIMES that Oscar Wilde's vogue on the Continent cannot be compared with Byron's.

Practically everything that Wilde ever wrote (and a good deal that has been falsely attributed to him) has been translated and published in nearly every European country, and his better-known works, such as "Salome" and the "Ballad of Reading Gaol," have been issued in every conceivable language, including Russian, Modern Greek, Czech, and Yiddish. I can confidently challenge anyone to produce such a list of Byronic translations as I can produce of Wilde's.

May I refer to one other point in your notice of the new edition of Wilde's works? You state that "there is not a single pretty image or a happy turn of expression in his Newdigate Prize Poem which he does not incorporate into later work." I know exactly the passages you refer to, and I maintain, sir, and am prepared to prove, if necessary, that exactly the opposite is the case. I have carefully collated all these parallel passages and in every case they are from poems published before 1878, and in no single instance is a line from "Ravenna" repeated in a poem written at a date subsequent to the Newdigate Prize Poem.—Yours, etc.,

149, Edgware-road, W. STUART MASON.
March 31.

Cambridge Chronicle, March 7, 1908.

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA. By Oscar Wilde. (Methuen).

This early work of Oscar Wilde's was commenced in 1882 and completed in the following year. It bears many evidences of immaturity and promise of greater work to come. It must have been written after a veritable debauch of Shakespeare, Webster, Turnour and Co., particularly Webster; it is even and often verbally reminiscent, and it is indeed a fairly good example of the Elizabethan school of "battle, murder, and sudden death." If the wholly unnecessary and quite undramatic Act IV. were omitted it should prove striking on the stage, if well acted; perhaps some of our local "societies" will oblige? The experiment would be interesting. The blank verse is often faulty, but on occasions both in thought and in expression rises to a high level. But it is only a promisary note.