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Oscar Wilde
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Vol. 8

REVIEWS.

De Profundis. By Oscar Wilde. (Methuen and Co. 12s. 6d.)

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Book monthly July 1908

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increase in the number of visitors, and the promise made present an animated appearance daily. Within the past few days there has been a large park between East Kent and Croydon Millers and Bakers. Today a cricket match will take place in the ground at Trinity Church. Last night Mr. Herbert Grant gave an organ recital at Trinity Church. Yesterday the weather was very fine and warm.

MARGATE.

Supply Stores, Agent for Ind, Coops, and Co. (Ltd.) For Groceries, Provisions, Wine, &c., Geo. L. Groom. Bendaal, Auctioneer, for Houses and Apartments Beach Hotel.—Facing sea, the S. Sunny grounds double those for the corresponding period last year. The new bridge receipts for June are more than concerts given every evening. Mr. Shanley's Sunday concerts are proving a great attraction. Large audiences attend the open-air. A slight shower fell last evening.

LITTLEHAMPTON.

For Guide send stamp Dept. H., Commercial Assn. Star Hotel, fac. hart. Mod. inc. terms.—Proper examinations are well patronised.

Daily Chronicle.

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Era.

July 4, 1908

"GROVE'S DICTIONARY."

If the world knows little of its greatest men, it knows still less of its greatest musicians; but with the precious possession of the goodly volumes of "Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians" the lover of the divine art can linger affectionately over the story of the trials, the struggles, and the triumphs of the masters and interpreters of melody; can glean knowledge of ancient forms of music and instruments; can acquaint himself with the earliest examples of orchestration; in a word, can avail himself of the research of busy and gifted experts. These are points especially to be noted by the amateur and the performer. The cultured critic will glance more particularly at the accounts given of modern and living composers, of the men now making musical history. Nothing, indeed, seems to have been left out of this admirably complete work, of which Messrs. Macmillan and Co. have just issued the fourth volume. To this there are close upon a hundred contributors, including the editor, Mr. Fuller Maitland, M.A., F.S.A., who contributes an interesting and highly critical analysis of the claims of Richard Strauss as an original composer. According to the editor he began as a "follower of the classical ideals." Then, we take it, Strauss wrote down his inspirations with simple, natural expression, and without that *bizarre* which Schubert, in 1816, said prevailed in most of the composers of his time—that "*bizarre* which unites the tragic and the comic, the agreeable and the repulsive, the heroic and the petty, the Holiest and a harlequin; infuriates those who hear it instead of dissolving them in love." Those who remember the storm of ridicule roused by Wagner both in Paris and London in the early seventies will not be surprised to learn that the "eccentricities of style" developed by Strauss in his later compositions are considered reprehensible. Says the editor, the composer "seems to have considered it his duty (on discovering that his eccentricities were an attraction to the public) to startle his hearers with some new piece of independence (not to say impertinence) with each successive production." His passion for notoriety is no doubt responsible in great measure for his choice of Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, a subject that is being much discussed just now. "The ill-timed realism of the orchestration at the moment when the Baptist's head is cut off is thoroughly characteristic of the composer, and that he should not see the incongruity of introducing such a touch at such a moment argues the want of the finer perceptions." The editor sums up his estimate of Richard Strauss thus: "It is too soon to guess what his position among the musicians of the world may ultimately be: while he is still young enough to admit that his main object is to shock and startle, he is not too old to change his convictions, as he has already changed them once before."

Sheffield Evening News, July 15, 1908.

In the mind of the average Frenchman Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Oscar Wilde have hitherto stood for modern English literature.

Mr. Robert H. Sherard's "Life of Oscar Wilde," privately printed in 1902, is now re-published by Messrs. Greening in a popular edition at 1s. net. Mr. Sherard was on terms of intimate friendship with Wilde, and in this life has attempted "to prove the eternal truths that no man who is a true artist can be a bad man at heart, and that an innate love of beauty will always keep alive in the mysterious recesses of the soul a hatred for what is base, a striving for what is noble. Of the aberration which brought this fine life to shipwreck so pitiful, I have nothing to say. I leave to the physiologists to classify it, to the physiologists to wrangle with the makers of laws over the degree of responsibility which it involves. It is a question altogether in the domains of pathology, and my task is with the artist and the friend alone. I can disregard, in writing of him, the cruel and devilish madness which, as people said and to their satisfaction proved, at times actuated him, with all the greater ease that, during the sixteen years of our friendship, by not one word of his, by not one gesture, by not one fleeting shadow of one evil thought, did it betray itself to me in the radiant and splendid gentleman that he was. I can say now what, in a letter to Sir Edward Clarke at the time of his trial, I offered to say in the Court of the Old Bailey, that during twenty years of communion with the world, of commerce, by profession and standing, with men and women in every rank of life, in many parts and places, I have never met a man more entirely pure in conversation nor one more disdainful of vice in its vulgarity and uncomeliness. Never there came the faintest suggestion of an unclean thought from those eloquent and inspiring lips: no coarse word ever soiled them; and if behind the wonderful eyes a demon was indeed crouching, madness here too allied itself with such supreme cunning of dissimulation, that for me, till the very end, in all that word implies of lofty and serene morality."

Pall Mall Gazette July 6, 1908

Frau Meta Illing, the well-known actress from the Lessing Theatre in Berlin, who has come to London to further a scheme by which Berlin is to have a short season of English plays performed by English actors early next year, explained her plans to a representative of the "Pall Mall Gazette," in the course of a chat.

"The syndicate which is behind me in my enterprise," she said, "does not contemplate anything so bold and speculative as taking over some big London 'star' with his or her company direct from a West-end theatre. We shall form our little repertoire of plays, and engage our own company from among the best artists. Germans want acting more than names. The acting of some of your most highly-paid artists, however satisfactory to a London audience, might not be acceptable in Berlin, where we value the work more than the personality of the actor and have a standard of our own.

"As regards the plays, we are also very critical, and I am further restricted by the intention of my syndicate not to put on anything that has been already performed in Berlin in German—for instance, 'The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,' 'The Gay Lord Quex,' and practically all of Oscar Wilde's plays. But there are still several of your best dramatists' works suitable for Germany which have not yet been seen in our country.

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University Library

"GROVE'S DICTIONARY."

If the world knows little of its greatest men, it knows still less of its greatest musicians; but with the precious possession of the goodly volumes of "Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians" the lover of the divine art can linger affectionately over the story of the trials, the struggles, and the triumphs of the masters and interpreters of melody; can glean knowledge of ancient forms of music and instruments; can acquaint himself with the earliest examples of orchestration; in a word, can avail himself of the research of busy and gifted experts. These are points especially to be noted by the amateur and the performer. The cultured critic will glance more particularly at the accounts given of modern and living composers, of the men now making musical history. Nothing, indeed, seems to have been left out of this admirably complete work, of which Messrs. Macmillan and Co. have just issued the fourth volume. To this there are close upon a hundred contributors, including the editor, Mr. Fuller Maitland, M.A., F.S.A., who contributes an interesting and highly critical analysis of the claims of Richard Strauss as an original composer. According to the editor he began as a "follower of the classical ideals." Then, we take it, Strauss wrote down his inspirations with simple, natural expression, and without that *bizarrerie* which Schubert, in 1816, said prevailed in most of the composers of his time—that "*bizarrerie* which unites the tragic and the comic, the agreeable and the repulsive, the heroic and the petty, the Holiest and a harlequin; infuriates those who hear it instead of dissolving them in love." Those who remember the storm of ridicule roused by Wagner both in Paris and London in the early seventies will not be surprised to learn that the "eccentricities of style" developed by Strauss in his later compositions are considered reprehensible. Says the editor, the composer "seems to have considered it his duty (on discovering that his eccentricities were an attraction to the public) to startle his hearers with some new piece of independence (not to say impertinence) with each successive production." His passion for notoriety is no doubt responsible in great measure for his choice of Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, a subject that is being much discussed just now. "The ill-timed realism of the orchestration at the moment when the Baptist's head is cut off is thoroughly characteristic of the composer, and that he should not see the incongruity of introducing such a touch at such a moment argues the want of the finer perceptions." The editor sums up his estimate of Richard Strauss thus: "It is too soon to guess what his position among the musicians of the world may ultimately be: while he is still young enough to admit that his main aim is to be original, he is not too old to change his convictions, as he has already changed them once before."

Sheffield Evening News. July 15. 1908.

In the mind of the average
Frenchman, Rudyard Kipling,
Oscar Wilde have hitherto stood
for modern English literature.

Jissen Women's University Library
2019-03-28

Formby Times, July 4, 1908

Mr. Robert H. Sherard's "Life of Oscar Wilde," privately printed in 1902, is now re-published by Messrs. Greening in a popular edition at 1s. net. Mr. Sherard was on terms of intimate friendship with Wilde, and in this life has attempted "to prove the eternal truths that no man who is a true artist can be a bad man at heart, and that an innate love of beauty will always keep alive in the mysterious recesses of the soul a hatred for what is base, a striving for what is noble. Of the aberration which brought this fine life to shipwreck so pitiful, I have nothing to say. I leave to the physiologists to classify it, to the physiologists to wrangle with the makers of laws over the degree of responsibility which it involves. It is a question altogether in the domains of pathology, and my task is with the artist and the friend alone. I can disregard, in writing of him, the cruel and devilish madness which, as people said and to their satisfaction proved, at times actuated him, with all the greater ease that, during the sixteen years of our friendship, by not one word of his, by not one gesture, by not one fleeting shadow of one evil thought, did it betray itself to me in the radiant and splendid gentleman that he was. I can say now what, in a letter to Sir Edward Clarke at the time of his trial, I offered to say in the Court of the Old Bailey, that during twenty years of communion with the world, of commerce, by profession and standing, with men and women in every rank of life, in many parts and places, I have never met a man more entirely pure in conversation nor one more disdainful of vice in its vulgarity and uncomeliness. Never there came the faintest suggestion of an unclean thought from those eloquent and inspiring lips: no coarse word ever soiled them; and if behind the wonderful eyes a demon was indeed crouching, madness here too allied itself with such supreme cunning of dissimulation, that for me, till the very end, in all that word implies of lofty and serene morality."

Frau Meta Illing, the well-known actress from the Lessing Theatre in Berlin, who has come to London to further a scheme by which Berlin is to have a short season of English plays performed by English actors early next year, explained her plans to a representative of the "Pall Mall Gazette," in the course of a chat.

"The syndicate which is behind me in my enterprise," she said, "does not contemplate anything so bold and speculative as taking over some big London 'star' with his or her company direct from a West-end theatre. We shall form our little répertoire of plays, and engage our own company from among the best artists. Germans want acting more than names. The acting of some of your most highly-paid artists, however satisfactory to a London audience, might not be acceptable in Berlin, where we value the work more than the personality of the actor and have a standard of our own.

"As regards the plays, we are also very critical, and I am further restricted by the intention of my syndicate not to put on anything that has been already performed in Berlin in German—for instance, 'The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,' 'The Gay Lord Quex,' and practically all of Oscar Wilde's plays. But there are still several of your best dramatists' works suitable for Germany which have not yet been seen in our country.

July 11, 1908

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THE publication in twelve volumes by Messrs. Methuen of the complete works of Oscar Wilde marks, in a striking way, the complete literary rehabilitation which this author has achieved. When one considers that at the time of Oscar Wilde's downfall the whole of his copyrights could have been purchased for about £100, one cannot help entertaining grave suspicions as to the value of criticism in England. It must be remembered that the contempt with which Mr. Wilde's work was greeted by the general mass of contemporary criticism was not confined to the period after his condemnation. A reference to the files of the newspapers containing the criticisms of his plays as they came out would reveal the fact that almost without any exception they were received with mockery, ridicule, and rudeness.

It is intensely amusing to read the comments in the daily papers at the present juncture on the same subject. Oscar Wilde is referred to, as a matter of course, as a great genius and a great wit, and takes his place, in the eyes of those who write these articles, if not with Shakespeare, at any rate with the other highest exponents of English dramatic art. This, of course, is as it should be, but we wonder what the gentlemen who write these glowing accounts of Mr. Wilde's genius were doing at the time when these works of genius were being poured out, and why it should have been necessary for him in order to obtain recognition to undergo the processes of disgrace and death. With the exception of the "Ballad of Reading Gaol" and "De Profundis" every work of Oscar Wilde's was written before his downfall. If these works are brilliant works of genius now, they were so before, and the failure of contemporary criticism to appreciate this fact is a lasting slur upon the intelligence of the country.

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The crowning meanness of which Henley was guilty with regard to Oscar Wilde was his signed review of the "Ballad of Reading Gaol." Henley was always an envious man; his attack on the memory of Stevenson is sufficient to show that; but he certainly surpassed himself when he wrote that disgraceful article. Surely a man possessing the smallest nobility of soul would have refrained at that juncture from attacking an old enemy—if, indeed, Wilde could properly be called an enemy of Henley's. Henley chose to make an unprovoked attack upon Wilde, from whom, as a matter of fact, he had received many benefits and kindnesses, but Wilde never retaliated in an ungenerous way, although his enormous intellectual superiority would have rendered it an easy task for him to pulverise Henley. It was always Wilde's way to take adverse criticism contemptuously, and, to the last, he never spoke of Henley with anything but good humour, albeit with some deserved disdain. The slow revenge of time has in this particular case bestirred itself to some purpose, and if we cannot say with justice "Who now reads Henley?" we can at any rate state very positively that for every reader that he has, Oscar Wilde has twenty. The reason is not far to seek. Wilde, putting aside his moral delinquencies, which have as much and as little to do with his works

the style of a German peasant or to-day perhaps. They no doubt ate a good deal of the coarse bread, which is a main preserver of health in the writings of the doctors, and a chief part of the horrible doom of Protection in the speeches of the politicians. Mr. Squere spoke to Bolder slowly, "for he was considering, as the saying goes, where to have him." One of the inhabitants of a world of monstrous delusions and of a distracted phantasmagoria. To him Syon seems an insular village, and the sects, the saints, the poets, and the painters are but madmen in various disguises. It is not difficult to guess the reason; the plain man is aware that men of genius often die in poverty, and to him poverty is the last and bitterest Gehenna, the sin that shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the world that is to come. Tell him that there are certain people who despite devotion, its social structure—was the work of ignorant poetry, its romance, its architecture, its craftsmanship, its who believes that the great Opus of the Middle Ages—its course of a review: it must suffice to say that a person points. The matter is too large to be dealt with in the to have him, but because he offers so many vulnerable cautious manner, not because it is difficult to know where has to approach Mr. Jeffs in a somewhat meditative and siding, as the saying goes, where to have him." One of the inhabitants of a world of monstrous delusions and of a distracted phantasmagoria. To him Syon seems an insular village, and the sects, the saints, the poets, and the painters are but madmen in various disguises. It is not difficult to guess the reason; the plain man is aware that men of genius often die in poverty, and to him poverty is the last and bitterest Gehenna, the sin that shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the world that is to come. Tell him that there are certain people who despite

July 18, 1908

LIFE AND LETTERS

LAST week, in referring to the new edition of Oscar Wilde's collected works brought out by Messrs. Methuen, we alluded to "The Picture of Dorian Gray," describing it as "one of the greatest and most terrible moral lessons that an unworthy world has ever received at the hands of a great writer." We now learn that this particular volume is not included in Messrs. Methuen's edition, and it appears that, in consequence of representations made by Mr. Warren, President of Magdalen College, Oxford, and other busybodies, the publishers refused to admit this book—which is probably Wilde's masterpiece—into their edition, and although it can be obtained, it is published, not by Methuen, but by Mr. Carrington, of Paris. This is only another of the numerous examples of the sort of intelligence which is to be found in a certain class of publishing house. It is regrettable that Mr. Ross, the able and painstaking editor of this edition, did not select a firm of publishers more worthy of issuing this collection of a great man's works. Some time ago we had occasion to review Mr. Warren's "Death of Virgil." It was, as we pointed out, a most lamentable publication, and one calculated to bring its author into contempt with the undergraduates at Oxford. It is outrageous that a man who has thus publicly demonstrated his utter literary incompetence should be in a position to interfere in literary matters and to constitute himself a censor of a man intellectually so greatly his superior. If Messrs. Methuen had taken the trouble to consult any recognised judge of literature they would not have rendered themselves ridiculous by endeavouring to suppress a great book. They will now have the mortification of knowing that the best literary opinion of the day is entirely against them, and incidentally of losing the large profits, for which their hearts so pant, that would have accrued to them if they had included among their manifold virtues a little judgment and strength of character.

John Bull

July 11, 1908

AMONG THE BOOKS.

BY HERBERT VIVIAN.

"De Profundis." By Oscar Wilde. (London: Methuen. 1908. 12s. 6d. net.)

"The Duchess of Padua." By Oscar Wilde. (London: Methuen. 1908. 12s. 6d. net.)

I should have thought it was unnecessary to reprint the works of O. Wilde, but he evidently possesses at least one admirer—namely, his editor, who astonishes us with remarks about the man's "extraordinary genius" and "magnificent intellectual endowment." If those gifts ever existed, they are certainly not illustrated by either of these books. In his impressions of prison O. Wilde calls himself a "lord of language," but, judging from the style of "De Profundis," I should dismiss him as a very junior lord indeed. Take the following sentence:—

Expression is as necessary to me as leaf and blossoms are to the black branches of the trees that show themselves above the prison walls, and are so restless in the wind.

Why leaf in the singular and blossoms in the plural? And the word "so" is a colloquialism usually avoided by writers who have any pretence to style. Again, on the next page I find the barbarous word "modernity," which has not been sanctified by the best dictionaries. Surely the kindest service which Wilde's friends could render him would be to permit him to be forgotten.

Adelaide Register: Oct. 18, 1908

A few Englishmen have written notably well in French, and Oscar Wilde was, perhaps, the most conspicuous.

SALOME DANCE.

Since our remarks concerning the Salome craze we have again received several letters from correspondents in various parts of the country, and the general opinion seems to be in favour of our contention that a gruesome sight such as the production of the head of John the Baptist on a public stage is unworthy the artistic aspirations of a modern music hall. It will be remembered we asked the pungent question why, if the Salome play of the late Oscar Wilde was refused a license by the Lord Chamberlain, a music hall representation of the same subject should be permitted? We pointed out that the Salome dance was merely the thin edge of the wedge, and that other sacred subjects would, in due course, find their way to the music hall stage, a place diametrically opposed to a class of work hitherto regarded with reverence. Our correspondents generally seem to echo with one voice the sentiments we expressed. It is time we cried "Halt!" in order to prevent the halter round our own necks. If we help stranglers to make nooses we cannot be surprised if they pull the ropes tightly. Surroundings are everything, and the environment of Salome is certainly not the music hall stage.

THE RECORDER.

In the American edition of Oscar Wilde's work, published by the Farmer-Keller Company, of New York, "The Picture of Dorian Gray" occupies, of course, its due place. The rival English edition suppresses the book, Messrs. Methuen explaining that they act in accordance with representations made to them by Mr. Warren, president of Magdalen College, Oxford, and others. Mr. Warren is known to literature only as the author of a foolish poem entitled "The Death of Virgil."

Books to Look Out For.

Mr. Hilaire Belloc is at least as distinguished in the world of essayists as in the realm of political satire, and his admirers will learn with interest that a collection of his essays is to be published in the autumn under the title of "The Eye-Witness."

A hitherto unpublished work by Nietzsche, entitled "Ecco Homo: Wie Man Wird, Man Ist," is to be issued shortly in this country.

A biography of Jonas Lie, the great Norwegian novelist, is being prepared by his son.

A selection from the letters of Oscar Wilde is to be issued under the direction of Mr. Robert Ross in the early autumn.

"Human Nature in Politics" is the subject of a new work by Mr. Graham Wallas, to be published shortly.

Nation July 25, 1908

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A. D.

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It is characteristic of what we may call the "Henleyean School" of criticism to confuse the life of a man with his art. It would be idle to deny that Oscar Wilde was an immoral man (as idle as it would be to contend that Henley was a moral one); but it is a remarkable thing that while Oscar Wilde's life was immoral his art was always moral. At the time when the attack by Henley was made there was a confused idea going about London that Oscar Wilde was a wicked man, and this was quite enough for Henley and the group of second-rate intelligences which clustered round him to jump to the conclusion that anything he wrote must also necessarily be wicked.

The crowning meanness of which Henley was guilty with regard to Oscar Wilde was his signed review of the "Ballad of Reading Gaol." Henley was always an envious man; his attack on the memory of Stevenson is sufficient to show that; but he certainly surpassed himself when he wrote that disgraceful article. Surely a man possessing the smallest nobility of soul would have refrained at that juncture from attacking an old enemy—if, indeed, Wilde could properly be called an enemy of Henley's. Henley chose to make an unprovoked attack upon Wilde, from whom, as a matter of fact, he had received many benefits and kindnesses, but Wilde never retaliated in an ungenerous way, although his enormous intellectual superiority would have rendered it an easy task for him to pulverise Henley. It was always Wilde's way to take adverse criticism contemptuously, and, to the last, he never spoke of Henley with anything but good humour, albeit with some deserved disdain. The slow revenge of time has in this particular case bestirred itself to some purpose, and if we cannot say with justice "Who now reads Henley?" we can at any rate state very positively that for every reader that he has, Oscar Wilde has twenty. The reason is not far to seek. Wilde, putting aside his moral delinquencies, which have as much and as little to do with his works as the colour of his hair, was a great artist, a man who passionately loved his art. He was so great an artist that, in spite of himself, he was always on the side of the angels. We believe that the greatest art is always on the side of the angels, to doubt it would be to doubt the existence of God, and all the Henleys and all the Bernard Shaws that the world could produce would not make us change our opinion. It was all very well for Wilde to play with life, as he did exquisitely, and to preach the philosophy of pleasure, and plucking the passing hour; but the moment he sat down to write he became different. He saw things as they really were; he knew the falsity and the deadliness of his own creed; he knew that "the end of these things is Death;" and he wrote in his own inimitable way the words of Wisdom and Life. Like all great men, he had his disciples, and a great many of them (more than a fair share) turned out to be Iscariots; but it is his glory that he founded no school, no silly gang of catchword repeaters; he created no "journalistic tradition," and he was not referred to by ridiculous bumpkins occupying subordinate positions in the offices of third-rate Jewish publishing-houses as "dear old Wilde." Those who knew and loved him as a man and as a writer were men who had their own individualities and were neither his shadows nor his imitators. If they achieved any greatness they did it because they had greatness in them, and not because they aped "the master." Henley has his school of "Henley's young men," of whom we do not hear much nowadays. Wilde has his school of young men in those who copy what was least admirable in him, but from a literary point of view he has no school. He stands alone, a phenomenon in literature. From the purely literary point of view he was unquestionably the greatest figure of the nineteenth century. We unhesitatingly say that his influence on the literature of Europe has been greater than that of any man since Byron died, and, unlike Byron's, it has been all for good. The evil that he did, inasmuch as he did a tithe of the things imputed to him, was interred with his bones, the good (how much the greater part of this great man!) lives after him and will live for ever.

A. D.

LIFE AND LETTERS

LAST week, in referring to the new edition of Oscar Wilde's collected works brought out by Messrs. Methuen, we alluded to "The Picture of Dorian Gray," describing it as "one of the greatest and most terrible moral lessons that an unworthy world has ever received at the hands of a great writer." We now learn that this particular volume is not included in Messrs. Methuen's edition, and it appears that, in consequence of representations made by Mr. Warren, President of Magdalen College, Oxford, and other busybodies, the publishers refused to admit this book—which is probably Wilde's masterpiece—into their edition, and although it can be obtained, it is published, not by Methuen, but by Mr. Carrington, of Paris. This is only another of the numerous examples of the sort of intelligence which is to be found in a certain class of publishing house. It is regrettable that Mr. Ross, the able and painstaking editor of this edition, did not select a firm of publishers more worthy of issuing this collection of a great man's works. Some time ago we had occasion to review Mr. Warren's "Death of Virgil." It was, as we pointed out, a most lamentable publication, and one calculated to bring its author into contempt with the undergraduates at Oxford. It is outrageous that a man who has thus publicly demonstrated his utter literary incompetence should be in a position to interfere in literary matters and to constitute himself a censor of a man intellectually so greatly his superior. If Messrs. Methuen had taken the trouble to consult any recognised judge of literature they would not have rendered themselves ridiculous by endeavouring to suppress a great book. They will now have the mortification of knowing that the best literary opinion of the day is entirely against them, and incidentally of losing the large profits, for which their hearts so pant, that would have accrued to them if they had included among their manifold virtues a little judgment and strength of character.

AMONG THE BOOKS.

BY HERBERT VIVIAN.

"De Profundis." By Oscar Wilde. (London: Methuen. 1908. 12s. 6d. net.)

"The Duchess of Padua." By Oscar Wilde. (London: Methuen. 1908. 12s. 6d. net.)

I should have thought it was unnecessary to reprint the works of O. Wilde, but he evidently possesses at least one admirer—namely, his editor, who astonishes us with remarks about the man's "extraordinary genius" and "magnificent intellectual endowment." If those gifts ever existed, they are certainly not illustrated by either of these books. In his impressions of prison O. Wilde calls himself a "lord of language," but, judging from the style of "De Profundis," I should dismiss him as a very junior lord indeed. Take the following sentence:—

Expression is as necessary to me as leaf and blossoms are to the black branches of the trees that show themselves above the prison walls, and are so restless in the wind.

Why leaf in the singular and blossoms in the plural? And the word "so" is a colloquialism usually avoided by writers who have any pretence to style. Again, on the next page I find the barbarous word "modernist," which has not been sanctified by the best dictionaries. Surely the kindest service which Wilde's friends could render him would be to permit him to be forgotten.

Atlantic Register: Oct. 19. 1908

Jissen 2009-03-18 Universiteitsbibliotheek

few Englishmen have written notably well
in French, and Oscar Wilde was, perhaps,
the most conspicuous.

SALOME DANCE.

Since our remarks concerning the Salome craze we have again received several letters from correspondents in various parts of the country, and the general opinion seems to be in favour of our contention that a gruesome sight such as the production of the head of John the Baptist on a public stage is unworthy the artistic aspirations of a modern music hall. It will be remembered we asked the pungent question why, if the Salome play of the late Oscar Wilde was refused a license by the Lord Chamberlain, a music hall representation of the same subject should be permitted? We pointed out that the Salome dance was merely the thin edge of the wedge, and that other sacred subjects would, in due course, find their way to the music hall stage, a place diametrically opposed to a class of work hitherto regarded with reverence. Our correspondents generally seem to echo with one voice the sentiments we expressed. It is time we cried "Halt!" in order to prevent the halter round our own necks. If we help stranglers to make nooses we cannot be surprised if they pull the ropes tightly. Surroundings are everything, and the environment of Salome is certainly not the music hall stage.

THE RECORDER.

Herald

SEP 20 1908

N the American edition of Oscar Wilde's work, published by the Farmer-Keller Company, of New York, "The Picture of Dorian Gray" occupies, of course, its due place. The rival English edition suppresses the book, Messrs. Methuen explaining that they act in accordance with representations made to them by Mr. Warren, president of Magdalen College, Oxford, and others. Mr. Warren is known to literature only as the author of a foolish poem entitled "The Death of Virgil."

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Sheffield Evening Mail. July 30. 1908

Books to Look Out For.

Mr. Hilaire Belloc is at least as distinguished in the world of essayists as in the realm of political satire, and his admirers will learn with interest that a collection of his essays is to be published in the autumn under the title of "The Eye-Witness."

A hitherto unpublished work by Nietzsche, entitled "Ecco Homo: Wie Man Wird, Man Ist," is to be issued shortly in this country.

A biography of Jonas Lie, the great Norwegian novelist, is being prepared by his son.

A selection from the letters of Oscar Wilde is to be issued under the direction of Mr. Robert Ross in the early autumn.

"Human Nature in Politics" is the subject of a new work by Mr. [Name] which is to be published shortly.

Nation

July 25. 1908

A SELECTION from the letters of Oscar Wilde, which Mr. Robert Ross is preparing for publication, will be published during the early autumn.

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2019-03-18 Women's University Library

Daily Chronicle.

As administrator of the estate and effects of Oscar Wilde, Mr. Robert Ross's attention has been called, as he says in a circular which he has just issued, "to the very large number of unauthorised reprints of the author's works being offered for sale in various parts of London and the country at the present time." He continues:

I am well aware that for some years subsequent to the late Mr. Wilde's death in 1900, and prior to my appointment as administrator of his estate in 1906, no steps were taken to put a stop to the sale of these unauthorised reprints; and I have no doubt that many of the prints in question have been offered for sale and otherwise dealt in by various members of the book trade in all good faith and under the belief that they were acting within their rights.

But Mr. Ross has been advised that steps should now be taken to put a stop to the sale of these unauthorised reprints, and he intimates as much to all concerned.

Queen.

August 29. 1908

"Irene Osgood," whose terrific exposure of the atrocities formerly committed in Algeria entitled *Servitude* has recently been published by Sisleys Ltd., was when she wrote the novel Mrs Harvey. She is now Mrs Robert Harborough Sherard, having a few months ago married the well-known author of *The White Slaves of England*, *The Life of Oscar Wilde*, &c. Mr Sherard is a lineal descendant of the poet Wordsworth. ST. BARBE.

Daily Express,

Sept. 3. 1908

Anomalies of Play Censorship.

To the Editor of the "Express."

Sir,—The production of Mr. Jerome K. Jerome's "The Passing of the Third Floor Back" draws attention to one of the many glaring absurdities connected with the censorship of plays in this country. It is an understood rule that the Lord Chamberlain and his officers will not allow any drama to be produced if it contains any characters taken from the Bible.

Thus the late Oscar Wilde's "Salome" was refused a licence, and I understand that Richard Strauss' opera on the same subject cannot be performed on the stage here. Recently, too, a distinguished living dramatist was refused permission to produce a drama on the subject of David and Bathsheba.

Mr. Jerome's play, however, turns obviously and designedly on a reincarnation of Christ Himself, and yet, because the sacred name is not mentioned, its performance is allowed. Even the most fervent believer in the Bible would hardly attach the same reverence to the secondary characters as to the great central figure of Christianity, and the whole business is an extraordinary example of paying attention to the letter and neglecting the spirit.

I do not for one moment suggest that Mr. Jerome's play should have been refused a licence, but its production does seem to me to show the absurdity of many refusals.

FIRST-NIGHTER. O.P. Club, Covent-garden, W.C.

A LITERARY HAIRDRESSER.

Glasgow Herald

It is something of an ordeal to fence with the loquacity of the average barber's assistant. One wishes to be civil and at the same time to discourage conversation which is so frequently on topics of little interest to the chair prisoner pro tem. It was therefore with a feeling of subdued impatience that I listened to the opening remarks of a young man into whose hands I committed myself a day or two ago. But almost at once interest was aroused by the unexpected trend of the assistant's remarks. Referring to the apparent injustice in the inequality of the sentences passed on the guilty in certain criminal cases, he said—

"Do you consider that justice, sir?"

I replied that the culprit's position in life seemed to be taken into consideration by the bench, and I quoted Oscar Wilde, who said that in the case of a professional thief a certain term of imprisonment ended his punishment, for on his release he was lost in the great sea of humanity, whereas imprisonment for a man in Oscar Wilde's position meant punishment so long as he lived, for, go where he may, he was sure to be known and "spotted."

"Is that taken from 'De Profundis'?"

I said it was, and asked if he had read the book.

"No, but I have read extracts."

"You take an interest in books, do you?"

"Yes, I do. I like solid literature."

"Such as?"

"Well, I like Emerson, his works are splendid reading; and Russell Lowell, and Professor James."

Then followed comments upon the views of these and other writers, while the scissors played an accompaniment—clip, clip, clip.

Carlyle, Huxley, and Tennyson were discussed, and with an occasional leading-on word from me the young man, with an admirable serenity and ready command of language, spoke with enthusiasm of the genius of these great leaders of thought. Finally, as I rose from the chair, he remarked—

"But above all, sir, I most delight in Plato; he is my master in philosophy, he had a great mind."

I confess I came away with some little reluctance, impressed as I was by the sincerity of the man, by the deep but quiet seriousness of an inquiring mind indicating the type of student who desires to get at truth in the heart of things. I thought of R. L. Stevenson's verse—

O, I wad like to ken
The reason o' the cause an' the wherefore o'
the why,

Wi' many anither riddle brings the tear into
my e'e.

And as I walked along the street I reflected on the unique experience of having one's hair cut to the accompaniment of "Emerson, splendid man"—clip, clip—"Carlyle, Tennyson, great men"—clip, clip—"Plato, great mind"—clip, clip, clip. J. D. P.

Country

Life

Oscar Wilde has written that "a cigarette is the perfect type of a perfect pleasure—it is exquisite." Many smokers will concur with his eulogy, even though they may not as yet have sampled the cigarettes manufactured by the Ardath Tobacco Company, 43 to 51, Worship Street, London. This firm are justly famous for their various brands of State Express Virginian Cigarettes, but recently they have had numerous solicitations from their large and discriminating clientele for a really pure and healthy Turkish leaf cigarette. The State Express Turkish Leaf No. 1 is made under perfectly hygienic conditions approved of by the medical fraternity, and nothing but the finest selected Dubec tobacco leaf is used in the process of manufacture. It is guaranteed in the strongest manner possible that no "faking" by means of scenting matter or any other foreign substance has been resorted to, and the flavour and aroma are those of the highest form of fully matured Turkish leaf in its natural state. These cigarettes are packed in handsome white enamelled padded-top boxes embossed in violet and gold, a box containing 100 costing 6s. As tobacco is said to be a panacea for bad temper and harassed nerves, this delightful cigarette will form an important household accessory. "Once smoked, always smoked," is sure to be the verdict passed by a discriminating smoker on this new production.

NEW LEAVES.

REVOLUTION AND THE ARTIST. "Oscar Wilde." By Robert H. Sherard.

sonality, his greatnesses and his limitations, his sincerities, and his posturings, Mr. Sherard's

to his master: "Take me, body and soul; The worker might well say in grim earnest the preamble to all rules of unions.

It would assist materially to have the economic position stated, in plain terms, in utilising the labour-power of the wage-slave, is a wage-slave, riches only coming to those cannot be rich; if he works for another he very slow. The man who works for himself people, although the change in opinion is a good many are trying to convince the Can this be impressed upon the toilers? possession of his own life and labour-time.

passes out of the wage-slavery state into nearer to the revolution, where the worker knowing full well every change brings us capitalist evolution is to take heart of grace, To realise the latent meaning of all has existed and failed for two thousand years reason of the poverty existing. Christianity the absence of any definite idea as to the the workers to the evils of wage-slavery, the real danger is the unconsciousness of

ism, Free Trade, Fiscal Reform. temperance, sectarianism, Liberalism, Tory- ment to be side-tracked to the shibboleths of actor in most cases, which permits our move- sacrificed to opportunism of a doubtful char- is this lack of courage and insight, qualities is not worth his salt to the movement. It

capitulators are both masters and victims— world at large—a revolution in which the expression of capitalism. The capitalists, obsolete a hundred years ago in the primitive age a running fight, with weapons almost victim—is still pursuing with splendid cour- control, the worker—for ever the butt and in every manifestation of organisation and of the leaders. While capitalism has changed given to it by even the best and most worthy understanding, not is a serious consideration of existence. Socialism, the one solution, the real principle of a change demanding the poverty, or of the dispossession of the means would in no way destroy the circumstance of every one of the reforms, if brought about, small reforms, never realising that all, fight with a persistence almost heroic for the integrity of most of the leaders, who are called to perform. I am not doubting the science of the revolutionary work they

of the leaders hardly realise ideals, let alone and palliative means to an end. But most vision of the worker merely saw in reform reform—might be safe, if the intelligent con- Even "a bit at a time" policy—palliative vigilance which would work wonders.

It would maintain in the workers' minds a is a wage-slave, riches only coming to those cannot be rich; if he works for another he very slow. The man who works for himself people, although the change in opinion is a good many are trying to convince the Can this be impressed upon the toilers?

relief to the workers. I am always glad to see the forces of trade unionism alive to some matter of importance, If the awakening could be a permanent con- vision the blessing would be manifold, for it would maintain in the workers' minds a vigilance which would work wonders.

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NEW LEAVES.

REVOLUTION AND THE ARTIST.

"Oscar Wilde." By Robert H. Sherard. (Greening.) 1s. net.

Mr. Sherard's "Story of an Unhappy Friendship" (not to be confused with the more comprehensive and more costly "Life of Oscar Wilde" by the same writer) has achieved a wide circulation amongst those who are interested in this unfortunate genius, and it is now re-issued in a more popular form. Mr. Sherard is already well-known to our readers as the author of that scathing indictment of modern industrialism, "The White Slaves of England." He shares with Mr. Robert Ross (to whom the book is dedicated) and one or two others the honour of having stood by Wilde in the hour of his defeat. This fact gives an added interest to the story of his relations with the "Apostle of Culture." Certainly no one is less disposed to condone "man's inhumanity to man" than the average Socialist. He is daily faced with the spectacle of crime, disease, and degradation, and, by virtue of his creed, he is indisposed to punish, but rather to pity and to help those who depart from the strict paths of a class-made morality. He sees the results, and he goes to the causes. To him, consequently, human frailty is less a matter for vengeance than for sympathy and forbearance. Environment, to say nothing of heredity, counted for much in the case of Oscar Wilde, as anyone who is familiar with life in our great public schools and elsewhere will readily understand. Students of sexual abnormalities—paederastia and the like—are following the lead of Professor Lombroso (a Socialist, of course), and are coming to see that such cases are less questions of criminal procedure than of clinics.

Whatever views we may hold as to Wilde's moral conduct (and, in our opinion, this is entirely a personal question, and has nothing to do with his attitude to the world at large), we cannot but remember with gratitude that he was the author of "The Soul of Man," perhaps the most brilliant defence of Socialism in the language.

Wilde, be it remembered, was supremely individualistic. Because he was an individualist he was a Socialist. Those Socialists who have read "The Soul of Man" (and what Socialist has not?) will recognise the truth of what may, at the first glance, appear to be a paradox. Let those unsocialist persons who are constantly asserting that Socialism would destroy individuality, reduce all to one dead level, and so forth, beware lest they fall into the pit which they have digged. Our quarrel, as Socialists, with the present system, is that there is no scope for individuality; that the genius, endowed with talents which can raise and ennoble his fellows, is stultified if not starved, to suit the will of his master. And these self-same masters of ours, are they not condemned out of their own mouths when they prate so loudly of the survival of the fittest? The fittest, forsooth! Can they not hear the laughter of the gods, these Mammonites, who sit in the high places? Has humanity, then, been in labour for all these ages to bring forth only that monstrous, the modern Captain of Industry? Is the overman of the future to spring from the Carnegies, the Rockefellers, and the Tafts of to-day. Well might Bernard Shaw suspect that Nature is getting sick unto death of the human race, if this were so.

Here we have the whole crux of the problem. To-day, under our mad, devil-take-the-hindmost system, the only type of individual who emerges from the modern maelstrom of "hustle" and "efficiency" and filth and squalor and mediocrity, is the capitalistic plutocrat—a type in which the human brain has been developed along one narrow groove, that of animal cunning. To them, literature, music, and culture, in fact, all that makes life desirable, is negligible. "Get thee behind me, degenerate!" says the plutocrat to the artist. And then, "Stay! Art thou an old master?" for "old masters" are worth money, for some reason or other, and anything which is worth money is desirable. See, dear comrades, how we encourage individuality!

Small wonder that Oscar Wilde, with his love of culture and his devotion to the beautiful, turned with disgust and nausea from the sickening spectacle of our ugly, sordid and soulless system. To him, poverty and dirt and disease were revolting. They interfered with his individuality; they marred his outlook. To live the beautiful life in the midst of strident ugliness was impossible; one might as well attempt to rear an erethium on a midden. We can imagine no better message to those insolent nondescripts who flaunt their obscene nakedness 'neath the banner of Individualism than that contained in "The Soul of Man." But the very title would prevent the message from reaching their unwilling ears. But conditions are not improving, and the plutocrat who to-day ignores the plea of Wilde, may to-morrow, willy-nilly, listen to the thunder of Wagner, another great artist, individualist and Socialist. Wagner it was who wrote:—

"I will destroy the existing order of things, which parts this one mankind into hostile nations, into powerful and weak, privileged and outcast, rich and poor, for it makes unhappy men of all. I will destroy the order of things that turns millions to slaves of a few, and these few to slaves of their own might, own riches. I will destroy this order of things that cuts enjoyment off from labour, makes labour a load, enjoyment a vice, makes one man wretched through want, another through overflow. Down to its memory will I destroy each trace of this mad state of things, compact of violence, lies, care, hypocrisy, want, sorrow, suffering, fears, trickery, and crime, with seldom a breath of even impure air to quicken it, and all but never a ray of pure joy."

To those who are interested in Wilde's per-

sonality, his greatnesses and his limitations, his sincerities, and his posturings, Mr. Sherard's book should prove of considerable value. If his style is sometimes disconcerting, we cannot but admit that he has given us a very readable book. We notice that all the photographs which appeared in the original edition are reproduced in the reprint.

"Whistler." By Bernard Sickert. (Duckworth.) 2s. net.

Few artists have been so misunderstood as James MacNeil Whistler, and there can be no doubt that the blame, if any, attaches in a great degree to Whistler himself. He believed, or affected to believe, with Wilde, that "to be great is to be misunderstood," and his love of swordplay overcame his love of incense. As was natural with a man of his talent, he knew his worth, and demanded recognition; yet his southern blood was always uppermost. With the few who were able to appreciate the man's genius, he deliberately quarrelled. He snatched at the proffered roses, and returned thanks with a rapier. His "Ten O'Clock" was a masterpiece of casuistry; his "Gentle Art of Making Enemies" a collection of brilliant insolences. Even Mr. Sickert, who is enthusiastic in his praise of Whistler's art, seems to suspect that, were the artist alive to-day, his enthusiasm would call down upon his devoted head some very corrosive epistles from the Butterfly. Fortunately, and, we think, rightly, we judge a painter by his pictures, not by his persiflage.

Whistler died five years ago, on July 17, 1903. We doubt whether five years gives sufficient perspective to enable us to fix, finally, his exact niche in the halls of fame; but Mr. Sickert has certainly acquitted himself very creditably in the attempt. He has endeavoured to do full justice to the artist's work, whilst making due allowance for his self-imposed limitations and his exasperating personality. Whistler's idiosyncrasies will long remain thorns in the sides of his commentators, and, unfortunately, we seem to live in an age when the personal note is predominant. Our ears are beset with chronicles of the backstairs; photographs of Miss Tottie Golightly wreathed in smiles and a modicum of chiffon compete with those of the Hon. Baldur Dash and his favourite elephant in demanding our homage. So it is that no book on Whistler would be complete without references to his personality. For, if Whistler was a butterfly on canvass, he was a wasp on notepaper. Swinburne, Wilde, Ruskin, he stung them all impartially, together with a number of small fry who deserved a far less interesting fate. But it is not for his biting wit that Whistler will be cherished. Many another could have penned the stinging attacks which make "The Gentle Art" a book of malice and a plague for ever; but no other man could have painted, say, "The Little White Girl," or the fourth "Nocturne in Blue and Silver."

Even now, it is not easy to appreciate the many subtle beauties of Whistler's work, at the first attempt, much less to comprehend them, and Mr. Sickert attributes this, in part, to the influence of the pre-Raphaelites, notably Holman Hunt, Ford Madox Brown, and Rossetti.

"The pre-Raphaelites," he tells us, "had accustomed the public to an orgie of strident greens, raw purples, Reckitt's blues, smarting yellows, searing scarlets, until all eyes, debauched with kaleidoscopic views, failed to see anything in Whistler but black and grey."

A statement which, although exaggerated, goes far towards explaining the lack of consideration with which the artist was met.

To-day, Whistler is slowly, but surely, coming into his inheritance; but, unfortunately for the nation, his pictures repose in private collections. Many of them have found a permanent home in that land of lucre, the United States of America. That the works of two of our greatest modernists—Whistler and Beardsley—have left this country, is but another instance of the deplorable lack of intelligence which characterises the plutocracy which governs us. To Socialists the moral is plain: It is they, and not we, who should be labelled unfit; and, were it not for the chaotic and anarchical commercialism which binds us, they would, ere now, have given place to others more fit to become the guardians of the nation's treasures. Art is longer than life; its appeal is to the universal soul in man. Any sane community, recognising the influence of beautiful pictures and beautiful statuary upon the minds of its citizens, would see to it that Art received at least as much consideration as main drainage or Nonconformity. Had "the Flaubert of painting" turned his energies to soap-making, he would, doubtless, have been the recipient of untold favours at the hands of England—that England whose heart is in Throgmorton Street, and whose soul reposes in Whitfield's Conventicle, enwrapped in cotton-wool.

So long as the means of life are in the hands of the few, so long will culture and the appreciation of the beauties of life remain the privilege of the few to the detriment of the nation as a whole. We respect the man who devotes his wealth to the acquisition of objects of beauty, rather than American heiresses. But a system which has its pivot in the Stock Exchange, which robs the nation of the enjoyment of beautiful things and sends the artist into the market to sell the fruit of his soul, like a common huckster, to the highest bidder, stands self-condemned in the eyes of those who believe with him that life is a great and glorious mystery, and not a mere money transaction.

We congratulate Messrs. Duckworth on the latest addition to their excellent "Popular Library of Art." Mr. Sickert's monograph, which is illustrated with some twenty reproductions of paintings and etchings (the latter, alone, make the book enjoyable) is ridiculously cheap. For anyone who wishes to appreciate the genius of Whistler, we can imagine no better guide.

C. L. E.

Aug. 26. 1909

Daily Chronicle.

As administrator of the estate and effects of Oscar Wilde, Mr. Robert Ross's attention has been called, as he says in a circular which he has just issued, "to the very large number of unauthorised reprints of the author's works being offered for sale in various parts of London and the country at the present time." He continues:

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ST. BARBE.

Daily Express,

Anomalies of Play Censorship.

To the Editor of the "Express."

Sir,—The production of Mr. Jerome K. Jerome's "The Passing of the Third Floor Back" draws attention to one of the many glaring absurdities connected with the censorship of plays in this country. It is an understood rule that the Lord Chamberlain and his officers will not allow any drama to be produced if it contains any characters taken from the Bible.

Thus the late Oscar Wilde's "Salome" was refused a licence, and I understand that Richard Strauss' opera on the same subject cannot be performed on the stage here. Recently, too, a distinguished living dramatist was refused permission to produce a drama on the subject of David and Bathsheba.

Mr. Jerome's play, however, turns obviously and designedly on a reincarnation of Christ Himself, and yet, because the sacred name is not mentioned, its performance is allowed. Even the most fervent believer in the Bible would hardly attach the same reverence to the secondary characters as to the great central figure of Christianity, and the whole business is an extraordinary example of paying attention to the letter and neglecting the spirit.

I do not for one moment suggest that Mr. Jerome's play should have been refused a licence, but its production does seem to me to show the absurdity of many refusals.

FIRST-NIGHTER.

O.P. Club, Covent-garden, W.C.

Sept. 3.
1908

Sept. 11. 1908

Glasgow Herald

A LITERARY HAIRDRESSER.

It is something of an ordeal to fence with the loquacity of the average barber's assistant. One wishes to be civil and at the same time to discourage conversation which is so frequently on topics of little interest to the chair prisoner pro tem. It was therefore with a feeling of subdued impatience that I listened to the opening remarks of a young man into whose hands I committed myself a day or two ago. But almost at once interest was aroused by the unexpected trend of the assistant's remarks. Referring to the apparent injustice in the inequality of the sentences passed on the guilty in certain criminal cases, he said—

"Do you consider that justice, sir?"

I replied that the culprit's position in life seemed to be taken into consideration by the bench, and I quoted Oscar Wilde, who said that in the case of a professional thief a certain term of imprisonment ended his punishment, for on his release he was lost in the great sea of humanity, whereas imprisonment for a man in Oscar Wilde's position meant punishment so long as he lived, for, go where he may, he was sure to be known and "spotted."

"Is that taken from 'De Profundis'?"

I said it was, and asked if he had read the book.

"No, but I have read extracts."

"You take an interest in books, do you?"

"Yes, I do. I like solid literature."

"Such as?"

"Well, I like Emerson, his works are splendid reading; and Russell Lowell, and Professor James."

Then followed comments upon the views of these and other writers, while the scissors played an accompaniment—clip, clip, clip

Carlyle, Huxley, and Tennyson were discussed, and with an occasional leading-on word from me the young man, with an admirable serenity and ready command of language, spoke with enthusiasm of the genius of these great leaders of thought. Finally, as I rose from the chair, he remarked—

"But above all, sir, I most delight in Plato; he is my master in philosophy, he had a great mind."

I confess I came away with some little reluctance, impressed as I was by the sincerity of the man, by the deep but quiet seriousness of an inquiring mind indicating the type of student who desires to get at truth in the heart of things. I thought of R. L. Stevenson's verse—

O, I wad like to ken.

The reason o' the cause an' the wherefore o' the why,

Wi' mony anither riddle brings the tear into my e'e.

And as I walked along the street I reflected on the unique experience of having one's hair cut to the accompaniment of "Emerson, splendid reading," "Carlyle, Huxley, Tennyson, great men"—clip, clip—"Plato, great mind"—clip, clip, clip.

J. D. P.

Country Life

1. 14. 18. 1908

Oscar Wilde has written that "a cigarette is the perfect type of a perfect pleasure—it is exquisite." Many smokers will concur with his eulogy, even though they may not as yet have sampled the cigarettes manu-

factured by the Ardath Tobacco Company, 43 to 51, Worship Street, London. This firm are justly famous for their various brands of State Express Virginian Cigarettes, but recently they have had numerous solicitations from their large and discriminating *clientèle* for a really pure and healthy Turkish leaf cigarette. The State Express Turkish Leaf No. 1 is made under perfectly hygienic conditions approved of by the medical fraternity, and nothing but the finest selected Dubec tobacco leaf is used in the process of manufacture. It is guaranteed in the strongest manner possible that no "faking" by means of scenting matter or any other foreign substance has been resorted to, and the flavour and aroma are those of the highest form of fully matured Turkish leaf in its natural state. These cigarettes are packed in handsome white enamelled padded-top boxes embossed in violet and gold, a box containing 100 costing 6s. As tobacco is said to be a panacea for bad temper and harassed nerves, this delightful cigarette will form an important household accessory. "Once smoked, always smoked," is sure to be the verdict passed by a discriminating smoker on this new production.

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And as I walked along the street I reflected on the unique experience of having one's hair cut to the accompaniment of "Emerson, splendid man"—clip, clip—"Carlyle, Tennyson, great men"—clip, clip—"Plato, great mind"—clip, clip, clip.

J. D. P.

NEW LEAVES.

REVOLUTION AND THE ARTIST.

"Oscar Wilde." By Robert H. Sherard. (Greening.) 1s. net.

Mr. Sherard's "Story of an Unhappy Friendship" (not to be confused with the more comprehensive and more costly "Life of Oscar Wilde" by the same writer) has achieved a wide circulation amongst those who are interested in this unfortunate genius, and it is now re-issued in a more popular form. Mr. Sherard is already well-known to our readers as the author of that scathing indictment of modern industrialism, "The White Slaves of England." He shares with Mr. Robert Ross (to whom the book is dedicated) and one or two others the honour of having stood by Wilde in the hour of his defeat. This fact gives an added interest to the story of his relations with the "Apostle of Culture." Certainly no one is less disposed to condone "man's inhumanity to man" than the average Socialist. He is daily faced with the spectacle of crime, disease, and degradation, and, by virtue of his creed, he is indisposed to punish, but rather to pity and to help those who depart from the strict paths of a class-made morality. He sees the results, and he goes to the causes. To him, consequently, human frailty is less a matter for vengeance than for sympathy and forbearance. Environment, to say nothing of heredity, counted for much in the case of Oscar Wilde, as anyone who is familiar with life in our great public schools and elsewhere will readily understand. Students of sexual abnormalities—paederastia and the like—are following the lead of Professor Lombroso (a Socialist, of course), and are coming to see that such cases are less questions of criminal procedure than of clinics.

Whatever views we may hold as to Wilde's moral conduct (and, in our opinion, this is entirely a personal question, and has nothing to do with his attitude to the world at large), we cannot but remember with gratitude that he was the author of "The Soul of Man," perhaps the most brilliant defence of Socialism in the language.

Wilde, be it remembered, was supremely individualistic. Because he was an individualist he was a Socialist. Those Socialists who have read "The Soul of Man" (and what Socialist has not?) will recognise the truth of what may, at the first glance, appear to be a paradox. Let those unsocialist persons who are constantly asserting that Socialism would destroy individuality, reduce all to one dead level, and so forth, beware lest they fall into the pit which they have digged. Our quarrel, as Socialists, with the present system, is that there is no scope for individuality; that the genius, endowed with talents which can raise and enable his fellows, is stultified if not starved, to suit the will of his master. And these self-same masters of ours, are they not condemned out of their own mouths when they prate so loudly of the survival of the fittest? The fittest, forsooth! Can they not hear the laughter of the gods, these Mammonites, who sit in the high places? Has humanity, then, been in labour for all these ages to bring forth only that ridiculous, the modern Captain of Industry? Is the overman of the future to spring from the Carnegies, the Rockefellers, and the Tafts of to-day. Well might Bernard Shaw suspect that Nature is getting sick unto death of the human race, if this were so.

Here we have the whole crux of the problem. To-day, under our mad, devil-take-the-hindmost system, the only type of individual who emerges from the modern maelstrom of "hustle" and "efficiency" and filth and squalor and mediocrity, is the capitalistic plutocrat—a type in which the human brain has been developed along one narrow groove, that of animal cunning. To them, literature, music, and culture, in fact, all that makes life desirable, is negligible. "Get thee behind me, degenerate!" says the plutocrat to the artist. And then, "Stay! Art thou an old master?" for "old masters" are worth money, for some reason or other, and anything which is worth money is desirable. See, dear comrades, how we encourage individuality!

Small wonder that Oscar Wilde, with his love of culture and his devotion to the beautiful, turned with disgust and nausea from the sickening spectacle of our ugly, sordid and soulless system. To him, poverty and dirt and disease were revolting. They interfered with his individuality; they marred his outlook. To live the beautiful life in the midst of strident ugliness was impossible; one might as well attempt to rear an erethium on a midden. We can imagine no better message to those insolent nondescripts who flaunt their obscene nakedness 'neath the banner of Individualism than that contained in "The Soul of Man." But the very title would prevent the message from reaching their unwilling ears. But conditions are not improving, and the plutocrat who to-day ignores the plea of Wilde, may to-morrow, willy-nilly, listen to the thunder of Wagner, another great artist, individualist and Socialist. Wagner it was who wrote:—

"I will destroy the existing order of things, which parts this one mankind into hostile nations, into powerful and weak, privileged and outcast, rich and poor, for it makes unhappy men of all. I will destroy the order of things that turns millions to slaves of a few, and these few to slaves of their own might, own riches. I will destroy this order of things that cuts enjoyment off from labour, makes labour a load, enjoyment a vice, makes one man wretched through want, another through overflow. Down to its memory will I destroy each trace of this mad state of things, compact of violence, lies, care, hypocrisy, want, sorrow, suffering, fears, trickery, and crime, with seldom a breath of even impure air to quicken it, and all but never a ray of pure joy."

To those who are interested in Wilde's per-

sonality, his greatnesses and his limitations, his sincerities, and his posturings, Mr. Sherard's book should prove of considerable value. If his style is sometimes disconcerting, we cannot but admit that he has given us a very readable book. We notice that all the photographs which appeared in the original edition are reproduced in the reprint.

"Whistler." By Bernard Sickert. (Duckworth.) 2s. net.

Few artists have been so misunderstood as James MacNeil Whistler, and there can be no doubt that the blame, if any, attaches in a great degree to Whistler himself. He believed, or affected to believe, with Wilde, that "to be great is to be misunderstood," and his love of swordplay overcame his love of incense. As was natural with a man of his talent, he knew his worth, and demanded recognition; yet his southern blood was always uppermost. With the few who were able to appreciate the man's genius, he deliberately quarrelled. He snatched at the proffered roses, and returned thanks with a rapier. His "Ten O'Clock" was a masterpiece of casuistry; his "Gentle Art of Making Enemies" a collection of brilliant insolences. Even Mr. Sickert, who is enthusiastic in his praise of Whistler's art, seems to suspect that, were the artist alive to-day, his enthusiasm would call down upon his devoted head some very corrosive epistles from the Butterfly. Fortunately, and, we think, rightly, we judge a painter by his pictures, not by his persiflage.

Whistler died five years ago, on July 17, 1903. We doubt whether five years gives sufficient perspective to enable us to fix, finally, his exact niche in the halls of fame; but Mr. Sickert has certainly acquitted himself very creditably in the attempt. He has endeavoured to do full justice to the artist's work, whilst making due allowance for his self-imposed limitations and his exasperating personality. Whistler's idiosyncrasies will long remain thorns in the sides of his commentators, and, unfortunately, we seem to live in an age when the personal note is predominant. Our ears are beset with chronicles of the backstairs; photographs of Miss Tottie Golightly wreathed in smiles and a modicum of chiffon compete with those of the Hon. Baldur Dash and his favourite elephant in demanding our homage. So it is that no book on Whistler would be complete without references to his personality. For, if Whistler was a butterfly on canvass, he was a wasp on notepaper. Swinburne, Wilde, Ruskin, he stung them all impartially, together with a number of small fry who deserved a far less interesting fate. But it is not for his biting wit that Whistler will be cherished. Many another could have penned the stinging attacks which make "The Gentle Art" a book of malice and a plague for ever; but no other man could have painted, say, "The Little White Girl," or the fourth "Nocturne in Blue and Silver."

Even now, it is not easy to appreciate the many subtle beauties of Whistler's work, at the first attempt, much less to comprehend them, and Mr. Sickert attributes this, in part, to the influence of the pre-Raphaelites, notably Holman Hunt, Ford Madox Brown, and Rossetti.

"The pre-Raphaelites," he tells us, "had accustomed the public to an orgie of strident greens, raw purples, Reckitt's blues, smarting yellows, searing scarlets, until all eyes, debauched with kaleidoscopic views, failed to see anything in Whistler but black and grey."

A statement which, although exaggerated, goes far towards explaining the lack of consideration with which the artist was met.

To-day, Whistler is slowly, but surely, coming into his inheritance; but, unfortunately for the nation, his pictures repose in private collections. Many of them have found a permanent home in that land of lucre, the United States of America. That the works of two of our greatest modernists—Whistler and Beardsley—have left this country, is but another instance of the deplorable lack of intelligence which characterises the plutocracy which governs us. To Socialists the moral is plain: It is they, and not we, who should be labelled unfit; and, were it not for the chaotic and anarchical commercialism which binds us, they would, ere now, have given place to others more fit to become the guardians of the nation's treasures. Art is longer than life; its appeal is to the universal soul in man. Any sane community, recognising the influence of beautiful pictures and beautiful statuary upon the minds of its citizens, would see to it that Art received at least as much consideration as main drainage or Nonconformity. Had "the Flaubert of painting" turned his energies to soap-making, he would, doubtless, have been the recipient of untold favours at the hands of England—that England whose heart is in Throgmorton Street, and whose soul reposes in Whitfield's Conventicle, enwrapped in cotton-wool.

So long as the means of life are in the hands of the few, so long will culture and the appreciation of the beauties of life remain the privilege of the few to the detriment of the nation as a whole. We respect the man who devotes his wealth to the acquisition of objects of beauty, rather than American heiresses. But a system which has its pivot in the Stock Exchange, which robs the nation of the enjoyment of beautiful things and sends the artist into the market to sell the fruit of his soul, like a common huckster, to the highest bidder, stands self-condemned in the eyes of those who believe with him that life is a great and glorious mystery, and not a mere money transaction.

We congratulate Messrs. Duckworth on the latest addition to their excellent "Popular Library of Art." Mr. Sickert's monograph, which is illustrated with some twenty reproductions of paintings and etchings (the latter, alone, make the book enjoyable) is ridiculously cheap. For anyone who wishes to appreciate the genius of Whistler, we can imagine no better guide.

C. L. E.

"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 kindness,
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, 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.

THE POSE OF MR. ARTHUR SYMONS.

THE word "pose" is used without any unfriendly intention, and, indeed, almost as photographers use it. Everybody poses more or less; everybody, that is to say, has some attitude in which he prefers to challenge public attention, whether because he finds it most effective, or because he considers it most characteristic. The differences are mainly of degree, and the great dividing difference is between the writers who pose principally for the gallery, and the writers who pose principally for themselves.

In the former class it is perhaps Mr. Chesterton, Mr. Bernard Shaw, and Mr. Hall Caine who take the prizes. At the close of the most effective passages in their writings they always seem to wave a signal to the *claque*. When Mr. Chesterton protests that only quite incredible propositions can be quite true, when Mr. Shaw recognises in the increasing popularity of divorce a healthy token of a great moral awakening, and when Mr. Hall Caine re-discovers the Christian religion one reads between the lines an implied *Nunc plaudite* as a sort of stage direction. The manner of these writers, if not their matter, is that of the stump orator or the popular entertainer. Not slow self-realisation, but the production of an immediately stunning effect upon a startled and gaping audience appears to be the end in view.

The pose of Mr. Arthur Symons is the other kind of pose. That applause is absolutely a matter of indifference to him, one must not venture to affirm. Knowing that there is a great deal of human nature in people, one would hesitate to say as much as that of anyone. But it certainly is not his first consideration; he does not seek it by compromises or over-emphasis, and has, indeed, the air of being much too self-satisfied to do so. In some of his prefaces he has stated, almost in so many words, that critics who fail to appreciate his work give the measure of their own incapacity. If they do not understand, so much the worse for them. He knows what he means, and has his point of view—his "system of aesthetics" and his philosophy of life. His apparent enthusiasm for non-morality is an integral portion of a comprehensive scheme—one of the irrefragable links in the chain that binds art and life together. The scheme is of more consequence than the world's opinion of it. So is the manifestation of it through his personality. Gaining the whole world is a poor thing beside gaining one's own soul. He will seek that first, whether the rest be added unto him or not. Of course, a man cannot do it without posing. Therefore, he poses. But he

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Fortnightly
July 1908

"THE DUCHESS OF

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

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Would fall from heaven, and the pal
Be in her sphere eclipsed, and the gr

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poses chiefly for himself, and the pose is not easily distinguishable from self-realisation.

It is a pose which has one suspicious feature—a certain air of æsthetic omniscience which does not always quite carry conviction: the pose, in fact, of a man extremely sensitive in every tentacle, with each tentacle separately laying intelligent hold upon a separate art. Mr. Symons writes poetry, fiction, and criticism. He criticises not literature only, but also painting, music, and the drama. He pronounces judgment not on one literature only, but on three: the English, the French, and the Italian. His range extends from the Elizabethans to the Decadents. It is true that he is continually saying luminous things on all of these very various subjects, but the circumstance remains suspicious all the same. It is incredible, to adapt a well-worn saying, that any man ever was quite so æsthetically omniscient as Mr. Arthur Symons appears to be. The closest parallel is perhaps to be found in the case of the brothers de Goncourt, and there is an obvious point at which that parallel breaks down. There were two brothers de Goncourt, and there is only one Mr. Arthur Symons to bear the undivided burden of universal knowledge.

After all, however, it is not the knowledge, but the pose, that is the really interesting thing. That, if it were not interesting in itself, would still be interesting, because it is so well sustained, and, at the same time, so well defined. Whatever may be the precise nature of the literary movement with which Mr. Symons is connected—a matter to which we will come presently—he stands towards it in a curiously double relation. He expounds it as well as illustrating it; he is its Sainte-Beuve as well as its Victor Hugo. The true inwardness of Mr. W. B. Yeats may be obscure except to the initiated; there is never any doubt as to the true inwardness of Mr. Symons. He is both artist and critic, and the critic lays the artist's soul upon the table, at once, as it were, inviting and defying ribaldry. He presents æstheticism at once in its latest and its most articulate phase, and the historical origin of the point of view and frame of mind which it expresses is worth inquiring into.

Its ultimate source should probably be sought in pre-Raphaelitism. At all events, it is not worth while to go further back than that reaction against the Philistinism and general ugliness of early and mid-Victorian life. It established a new religion of beauty, albeit on what must have seemed to the Philistines a somewhat doleful basis. It lacked laughter. The enemies of Philistinism who laughed, as Matthew Arnold did, were not pre-Raphaelites. The pre-Raphaelites themselves were perhaps a

little too conscious that the overthrow of Philistinism was no laughing matter. Ecstasy was perhaps their substitute for hilarity. It was a disposition to a sort of æsthetic ecstasy which they bequeathed to their Oxford successors, specifically known as Æsthetes, who had first Walter Pater and then Oscar Wilde for their prophets.

Plenty of Oxford men not yet middle-aged can well remember that Æsthetic Movement and the strange jargon talked by its *illuminés*. They were "utter," they said; they were "too too"; they were "all but." And no doubt the boast that they were "all but" was the best founded, and received the most ironical justification. They had not, that is to say, the sincerity of conviction which could enable them to stand firm in the day of persecution, and that day of persecution came upon them with the suddenness of a thunder-clap.

What happened, to be precise, was this: Towards the end of a certain summer term, and in the midst of the season of bump suppers, a certain Æsthete of some notoriety brought forward a resolution at the Union proposing that the Society should discontinue its subscription to *Punch*, because that journal was ridiculing the "New Renaissance." The proposal was rejected, but the end of the matter was not in the Debating Hall, but at the Æsthete's college, where a party of boating men were convivially celebrating their success upon the river. The harmony of the evening ended in an attack upon the Æsthete. His collection of blue china was thrown out of his window, and he himself was put under the college pump. It was threatened that the same measures would be taken with other Æsthetes in other colleges, and in the panic that ensued the Æsthetic Movement perished. The leading Æsthete hurried as one man to the barber's to get their hair cut, and to the haberdasher's to buy high collars. Men who, on the previous day, had resembled owls staring out of ivy bushes, now cultivated the appearance of timid cows shyly peeping over white walls; and all the available enthusiasm—since Oxford must always have an enthusiasm of some sort—was transferred to Canon Barnett's scheme for conveying the higher life to the lower orders through the medium of University Settlements.

That is the true story of the great Philistine revolt against the tyranny of æstheticism—but it was only a local insurrection. Æstheticism was expelled from Oxford, but was not extinguished. Only its exterior affectations were killed by the ridicule of *Patience* and *The Colonel*. If not the mantle, at least a double portion of the spirit of the Oxford Æsthete was inherited by the London Decadents, who, to a certain extent, altered the character of the movement.

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"THE DUCHESS OF PADUA"

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(Methuen, 12s. 6d.)

This is the first volume of the new works of Oscar Wilde. If there were we should hesitate about the need for the publication of this tragedy, since the fame of the author, since it will sweep away the prose translation in German, which has hitherto been a genuine thing. We have now the original text, though here and there corrupt, and misprints are not wanting to this play for any new proof of genius, will look in vain. *The Duchess of Padua*; and of all the works of an had its root in high-handed borrowings, the least masterfully, imitative. A tionally adroit by nature and finely mastered forms easily, and used them which was generally for the expression of kind of brilliant perversion, of ideas were brilliant perversions of other people's often but "pot-shots" at truth, if we the surprising correctness with which possibly of less moment to the gay in which they were fired and his shooting in the direction in which it turned its back. There is nothing of *Padua*. It stops short at the imitation of wicked Duke, in the middle of a Polish to a young man, remarks:—

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but we need not complete what ever they themselves. To take a longer passage:—

They were, for the most part, older men, and they were living under a gloomier sky. Consequently, they stood to the Æsthetes almost in the relation of professionals to amateurs. The Æsthetes, after all, had been irresponsible beings, sad as night (when they were so sad) only for wantonness. There was no real temperamental gloom about them; there hardly can be any for youth at Oxford, especially in the summer term. Most of them were only half in earnest, and were, in reality, laughing in their sleeves. Even their leader, Oscar Wilde, was doing so. The Decadents deceived themselves quite as much as they deceived the world. For anything that any of them knew to the contrary, they were thoroughly in earnest. There was a genuine inwardness about their melancholy, and they were under fresh influences, of which the Æsthetes had known little or nothing: French influences, Bohemian influences, alcoholic influences. For Greek moderation they substituted French extravagances, most of them knowing the French tongue well and the Greek indifferently. The Butte Montmartre was their Parnassus, and their culminating hour came when they fished Verlaine out of the Café du Soleil d'Or and exhibited him in London.

One need not insist, however, for the phase did not endure. Of Decadent melancholy, as of all carnal pleasure, cometh satiety at last. Perhaps the era of wars and the call for energy and efficiency helped to put an end to it. At all events, the party of Decadent rhymers who read their verses to one another in a Fleet Street Tavern gradually broke up. Death and division—and in some cases perhaps marriage also—made a difference. One Decadent came to a mysteriously tragic end in Paris; a second drank himself to death; a third was run over by a cab. Others seceded and relapsed into commonplace, orderly courses. Among these are included a distinguished librarian in London, and a distinguished reporter in the United States. To Mr. Arthur Symons, almost alone among them belongs the glory of going on and still to be, and even he has not gone on precisely upon Decadent lines. He does not now call himself a Decadent, if he ever did. Probably he has always, like Sainte-Beuve, stood a little aloof from the movements with which he has seemed to be most intimately associated. That is perhaps the inevitable destiny of the man who is critic as well as artist. Decadentism, at any rate, has been in his case a station on the road to Mysticism. Through the one mental phase, as through the other, he has, as he puts it, been gradually working his way "towards the concrete expression of a theory, or system of æsthetics, of all the arts."

One must beware, of course, of criticising a system of æsthetics

which is as yet only partially expounded. It often happens, however, that a theorist anticipates his conclusions by the reiteration of a phrase or a word, and to this rule Mr. Symons seems to have conformed. His favourite word is "escape"; his favourite phrase "escape from life." Now the one and now the other re-appear continually in all kinds of connections. Of John Addington Symonds, for example, he writes: "All his work was in part an escape, an escape from himself." Of Ernest Dowson's indulgence in the squalid debaucheries of the Brussels Kermesse he writes: "It was his own way of escape from life." Passages of that tenour abound in his writings, and, in one of his papers on "The Symbolist Movement in Literature," he explains his meaning more precisely. The exposition is too long to quote in full, but the essential sentences must be given:—

Our only chance, in this world, of a complete happiness, lies in the measure of our success in shutting the eyes of the mind, and deadening its sense of hearing, and dulling the keenness of its apprehension of the unknown. . . . As the present passes from us, hardly to be enjoyed except as memory or as hope, and only with an at best partial recognition of the uncertainty or inutility of both, it is with a kind of terror that we wake up, every now and then, to the whole knowledge of our ignorance, and to some perception of where it is leading us. To live through a single day with that overpowering consciousness of our real position, which, in the moments in which alone it mercifully comes, is like blinding light or the thrust of a flaming sword, would drive any man out of his senses. . . . And so there is a great silent conspiracy between us to forget death; all our lives are spent in busily forgetting death. That is why we are so active about so many things which we know to be unimportant; why we are so afraid of solitude, and so thankful for the company of our fellow creatures. Allowing ourselves for the most part to be but vaguely conscious of that great suspense in which we live, we find our escape from its sterile, annihilating reality, in many dreams, in religion, passion, art; each a forgetfulness, each a symbol of creation. . . . Each is a kind of sublime selfishness, the saint, the lover, and the artist having each an incommunicable ecstasy which he esteems as his ultimate attainment; however, in his lower moments, he may serve God in action, or do the will of his mistress, or minister to men by showing them a little beauty. But it is before all things an escape. . . .

That is the theory of art—which is at the same time a theory of life—in so far as it has, up to the present, been formulated. No human pursuit is, or is viewed as, an end in itself. All our occupations—except those, perhaps, in which we engage at the bidding of such imperative and elementary impulses as hunger and thirst—are so many devices for diverting our minds from the one great problem which we cannot hope to solve. For this reason the squire rides to hounds; for this reason the smart set play bridge. This is the motive of the indiscriminate debauchery of the dissolute, and of the asceticism of the monk; this is the origin and the use of poetry, painting, music, and the drama. But

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the way of the artist is the best, since, by the symbolism of art,
the finite may obtain, in the measure of finite capacity, some
consoling apprehension of the infinite.

No doubt the formula lacks some of the essentials of a philo-
sophy. It implies that the mass of men are a good deal more
self-conscious, and a good deal more prone to the contemplation
of the riddle of the Universe than we actually find them. That
riddle is, in fact, far more terrifying to those who think they
know the answer to it than to those who recognise that they do
not. It frightened Bunyan, but it did not frighten Gibbon.
Many men live calmly and contentedly in the blind indefinite
faith expressed in the "*Alles zal recht komen*" inscribed on the
tomb of President Brand of the Orange Free State. To many
other men their life upon the earth is so interesting, and their
work there, as it seems to them, so clearly an end in itself, that,
when the hour sounds for them to drop it, their impulse is to
exclaim, with Cecil Rhodes: "So little done! So much to do!"
There are clear cases to which the formula does not apply, and
there are plenty of others. Some men, indeed, instead of being
scared by the mystery, are fascinated by it. Herbert Spencer
did not want to run away from it—though it is true that his own
generalisations appalled him in the end; nor did Henry Sidgwick;
nor did T. H. Green.

The most, in fact, that can be said of the formula is that it is
true of the cases to which it applies—of the cases, for instance,
of such religious fanatics as John Henry Newman and Frederick
Faber, and also of such sceptics as, say, Arthur Hugh Clough,
James Thomson, and Edward FitzGerald—and that it furnishes
a connecting link between the successive phases of Mr. Symons'
own literary career. His work, whatever else it may be, seems
intended to be read as the record of a series of endeavours to
"escape from life"—life being interpreted to mean the unceas-
ing circle of speculation as to the whence, the whither, and the
why. The early poems relate the attempt to escape by means
of "the raptures and roses." The writer recounts his voyages
to Cythera, and describes the particularities of miscellaneous
caresses. He also relates how he has sat up all night smoking
and drinking in foul air and unprofitable company. But all in
vain. He did not enjoy as mere Philistines might, and there was
no escape for him in this direction. The emptiness and the
hollowness of it all were too apparent:—

We smoke, to fancy that we dream,
And drink, a moment's joy to prove,
And fain would love, and only seem
To love because we cannot love.

Draw back the blinds, put out the light;
'Tis morning, let the daylight come.
God! How the women's cheeks are white,
And how the sunlight strikes us dumb!

This was the sort of thing that set the reviewers jibing, with
the result that, in a subsequent preface, Mr. Symons expressed
contempt for them. It had appeared to them, no doubt, that
men who took no pleasure in such proceedings might as well
refrain from them, and it was, indeed, hardly reasonable to expect
them to divine that the poet was only drawn to them as a dis-
traction from the riddle of this painful earth. The motive, more
characteristic of French than of English poets, was too subtle for
them, and perhaps Mr. Symons himself, looking back upon the
matter, would admit that, even in his case, it was not so much
express as implied, and that he has even, in part, given us an
ex post facto glorification of dissolute behaviour.

The ascription of the motive, however, fits in with the general
scheme. Somehow and somewhere the escape from life must
be found if sanity was to be preserved—that is the consistent pose.
We have seen Mr. Symons seeking it in Bohemianism. We then
see him seeking it in love, in travel, in every one of the arts from
poetry to skirt dancing. The arts lead him on through Symbolism
to Mysticism, and therein he finds such release as it is possible
for him to achieve:—

The doctrine of Mysticism . . . presents us, not with a guide for con-
duct, not with a plan for our happiness, not with an explanation of any
mystery, but with a theory of life which makes us familiar with mystery,
and which seems to harmonise those instincts which make for religion,
passion, and art, freeing us at once from a great bondage. The final uncer-
tainty remains, but we seem to knock less helplessly at closed doors, coming
so much closer to the once terrifying eternity of things about us, as we
come to look upon these things as shadows, through which we have our
shadowy passage.

This statement, it must be admitted, does not exactly
define a doctrine or do anything more than express a frame
of mind, but the language of the most elaborate theologians,
when precise definitions are invited, seldom seems to amount
to more than that. Whatever some half-educated or
muddle-headed clergymen may say, no religion—no solution
of the ultimate problem—can rest, in the last resort, upon
authority. "You mustn't tell me what the soldier said. It isn't
evidence," is the unanswerable retort to whoever presumes to
quote on these matters a Council of the Church, or a Bishop, or
a Pope, or any other Great Panjandrum. The Great Panjan-
drums of the past have declared many doctrines, which the Great

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But such sparks—heralding the storm—are rare. For the present the author does as well as he can.

The first impression gained is that well. The Duchess of Padua is at a Jacobean, tragedy in five acts of prose. On the face of it, the scene is a fable of blood and poison high love and savage hate. Here there is "comic relief" with a scene that as wisely foolish as could be, as for Juliet's nurse. Only in the act but one, worked up to the "situation" platform stage, does the scheme reveal date. Much of the language, too, is (we need hardly say that it is all excellent) the duchess, who has murdered her husband is descanting on the "stark winding sheet" she remarks:—

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Panjandrums of the present do not hold. Any religion which depended solely upon that sort of evidence would long since have been argued out of existence. Yet religion remains, though all the dogmas are in the melting-pot, and the Christian terminology has ceased to correspond to anything definite in thought or definable in language. It remains because men feel that, through some faculty other than reason, they have apprehension of certain truths which they can neither demonstrate nor formulate, because, that is to say, they have, and cannot divest themselves of, the sort of faith which is the evidence of things not seen. It is a faith which results in codes of conduct, though it does not explicitly supply them. It does not make the infinite comprehensible to the finite intelligence, but it does rob the infinite mystery of its terror. In that sense—as distinguished from the sense of the Theosophists with their elaborate cosmogony—it might almost be said that we are all Mystics nowadays, though not all of us use the name, or are even conscious of our title to it. In so far as that is Mr. Symons' meaning, what he says of the uses of Mysticism is more true than new. The individual note is struck rather in his insistence upon the maddening terror which the mystery may inspire. Of this, too, there is perhaps an explanation.

For the origin of the terror, where it is felt, seems to lie, not in the mystery itself, but in the belief in some particular solution of it. In spite of Addison's appeal to his friends to "see how a Christian could die"; in spite of the heroism of innumerable martyrs; in spite of Saint Paul's "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain," it is a common reproach against the Christian religion that it has taught men to be afraid of death. The Christian sinner is afraid to die (at all events in cold blood), if the Christian saint is not. Death is feared by him in a sense in which it was never feared by the Pagans, and as it is not feared to-day by Buddhists, Hindus, or Mohammedans. And for a very obvious reason. To him alone has the doctrine of the terrors of hell been preached.

The intensity of the terror, moreover, does not depend upon, or vary concomitantly with, depravity of conduct. It depends far more upon the shape in which the doctrine is presented, and upon the nervous organisation of the hearer. Some teachers are very vague about hell, and others are very precise; some emphasise and others minimise the danger of going there. The hell imagined by Dante is bad enough, but it can be made still more appalling by the rhetoric of a Spurgeon. A further aggravation of the horror may reside in uncertainty as to the means of avoiding it. According to some teachers, one may be predestined to

it; according to others one may have predestined oneself to it by committing "the unpardonable sin." Theoretically, the way of escape may lie through "grace"; but the granting of grace is a miracle that, in any particular case, may happen to be withheld. The doctrine, expressed in that form, is very trying to the nerves.

Some nerves are proof against it. Some natures lack imagination, and fail to visualise the picture. The doctrine only produces its full effect upon the mind of a child at once literal, sensitive, and imaginative. To such children it causes long hours of agonising dread of which they do not even dare to speak. That way lies madness as every specialist in insanity well knows; and even emancipation from the literal doctrine itself does not necessarily mean that all its effects are nullified thenceforth and for ever. Calvinism and Methodism are creeds which continue subtly to influence impressionable minds long after they have ceased to be believed. May we not perhaps find in this fact a further clue to the philosophy of life, and even to the "system of æsthetics" of Mr. Arthur Symons?

The suggestion is not made on the strength of any personal knowledge—to which, if one possessed it, it would be impertinent to refer—but as the result of a careful reading of the work entitled "Spiritual Adventures." The first paper, called "A Prelude to Life," and written in the first person, is not necessarily to be read as autobiography, and the other papers cannot be so read; but inferences may be drawn from the nature of the emotions which they dissect, and from the kind of insight shown in the dissection. Methodism, and the hell fire which blazes around Methodism, and the madness which is akin to it, are themes to which Mr. Symons recurs as if they had a special fascination for him; themes, too, on which he writes like a man who has acquired his knowledge, not from without, but from within—who has not merely observed but felt. The story of "Seaward Lackland" is specifically the story of a preacher whom Methodism drove to madness. In "A Prelude to Life" we find this significant passage:—

The thought of hell was often in my mind . . . always ready to come forward at any external suggestion. Once or twice it came to me with such vividness that I rolled over on the ground in a paroxysm of agony, trying to pray God that I might not be sent to hell, but unable to fix my mind on the words of the prayer. I felt the eternal flames taking hold of me, and some foretaste of their endlessness seemed to enter into my being.

This surely is neither invented nor imagined, but is remembered. One would say that it is one of those vivid memories

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This, too, is quite in the period:— It would be a thin So terrible that the amazed sta Would fall from heaven, and th Be in her sphere eclipsed, and

but we need not complete what themselves. To take a longer pass

which are also influences, and that much that seems idiosyncratic in the subsequent attitude towards life and creeds may be explained by it. Some men in getting rid of their creeds get rid also of their fears, and, ceasing to believe, become as if they never had believed. That is the impression which one derives from such sceptical writers as Matthew Arnold and Sir Leslie Stephen. But there are also two other classes of sceptics: those who are made melancholy by the obligation to abandon hope, and those for whom a vague is substituted for a definite apprehension. To this last class belong all those who, being sensitively organised, have been thoroughly frightened by Methodist or Calvinist threatenings in their childhood. Unless Mr. Arthur Symons is such a one, then the internal evidence furnished by his writings is singularly misleading. All the indications are that Methodism made him before art and literature began to mould him; and that, when he speaks of an "escape from life," he means, in the first instance, an escape from Methodism, and, in the second instance, an escape from the ineffaceable mark which Methodism has branded on his mind.

FRANCIS GRIBBLE.

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ACTOR BETTERS AUTHOR.

Maurice Barrymore was noted for his inability to remember the lines of a part until he had played it dozens of times. At the first performance of Oscar Wilde's comedy, "A Woman of No Importance," the actor substituted for the author's speech a sentence of his own so witty that it has remained part of the piece ever since. In the first act of "A Woman of No Importance," Lord Illingworth is besought by his son to marry the boy's mother. The reply is nearly a page long, and, at the premiere, Barrymore couldn't remember a word of it. He hesitated only a moment, however, before delivering the sense of the speech in the following line: "Well, I will, my boy; I will, only—it's so damned conventional!"

MR. H. B. IRVING'S "FUTURES."

"LORD ARTHUR SAVILLE'S CRIME."

A NEW BENEDICK AND SOME RICHARDS.

IT was at the Garrick Club that I found opportunity for a short talk with Mr. H. B. Irving with regard to his arrangements for the future.

"I start my tour to-morrow at Douglas, Isle of Man," said Mr. Irving, "and after that I go to Llandudno, Dublin, Belfast, Scarborough, and Eastbourne. These towns will account for my first six weeks. Other provincial bookings are pending.

"As a matter of fact, I am not anxious to book a very long provincial tour just yet, as I hope to start another West-End season before Christmas. If not before Christmas, then as early as possible in the spring. For the present tour my repertory will include 'The Lyons Mail,' 'The Bells,' 'Hamlet,' and 'Louis the Eleventh' as old works. I carry also two new pieces, Mr. Justin Huntly McCarthy's 'Caesar Borgia,' and 'The Sergeant of Hussars,' written by Miss Cicely Hamilton, author of 'Diana of Dobson's.' The REFERENCE gave such an encouraging notice of this little play when it was performed one Sunday evening by the Play Actors' Society that for some time past I have thought of securing it for my wife—Miss Dorothea Baird—to play the lead, and now I have secured it!

"Any other new plays in view? Yes. I have arranged for what seems to me to be quite a promising and well-written play of the lighter sort, with a splendid part for me and a very nice heroine's part for Mrs. Irving. It has been written by Messrs. Cannan and Peacey, and is a three-act play—a 'society' piece, I suppose you would call it. It has a good deal of the Oscar Wilde æsthetic attitudinising and passion for epigram, and indeed it is somewhat on the lines of that author's comedy, 'The Importance of Being Earnest.' The scene is laid in and around Mayfair. Title? Oh, it at present is called 'Lord Arthur Saville's Crime.'

"Undoubtedly the most important and most picturesque of my new productions will be 'Caesar Borgia,' which, as you know, I tried in Edinburgh last November. That I must do on tour, whether I try 'Lord Arthur Saville's Crime' this time or not. Borgia is a fine acting character, a kind of part to keep an actor thoroughly on the alert right up to its dramatic finish. Mrs. Irving has an attractive part—the heroine, Lavinella. I regard it as a fine drama, almost a fine tragedy. The action is swift, comprising, in fact, a night, a morning, an afternoon, and an evening in Caesar Borgia's career. I hope London will like it, but, of course, you never can tell.

"For my next West-End season I thought of making a start with 'Caesar Borgia'—certainly as regards any new play production. But I may actually open that season with 'The Lyons Mail,' as you advise.

"I am particularly anxious concerning my reception as Lesurques and Duboc, Charles the First, Louis the Eleventh, and Mathias. I have not been seen at the West-End in any of my father's great parts yet—except Hamlet.

"What other Shakespearean characters am I considering? I would like to try Macbeth, but now I must wait until Mr. Tree has given his revival of the play. I had a notion (as the REFERENCE stated long ago) of doing Richard the Third. In any case, I think you may safely say that one of these days I shall revive 'Richard the Second.' My father always wanted me to play that character. And certainly I shall attempt the character of Benedick.

"It will give me great pleasure to present several of my father's successful plays in London, not only to see what I can do with them, but also because I think there must be many playgoers who would be glad to see them revived. They should still have a vogue—especially," he added, with something of his father's semi-satirical smile—"especially as some of these plays are being given in condensed form at the variety theatres—'The Bells' and 'The Lyons Mail' particularly.

"You suggest that I should revive 'Becket' and 'Olivia'? I must confess I had not thought of reviving 'Olivia.' Still, as you say, playgoers might like to see me as the dear old Vicar and (also as you say) Mrs. Irving as Olivia. I hadn't thought of that. I would like to play Becket; but the play's mournful association with the closing scene of my father's life makes me anxious to delay revival of Tennyson's play as long as possible. Still, I shall, I hope, try to play Becket one of those days.

"I shall certainly take your advice," added Mr. Irving, "as to leaving 'Vanderdecken' and 'Eugene Aram' severely alone. There was always more morbidity than money in them. Now, a new play—a really human play—on 'The Phantom Ship' legend might—Eh? But Time will show—and there is plenty of time yet before showing," said Mr. Irving, as he left the Garrick Club en route to the Court Theatre, where he had called a night rehearsal for his company. CARADOS.

OSCAR WILDE'S STORIES.

His Best Achievements.

Only a Sunday or so ago I read in my "Referee" that Mr. H. B. Irving had in his possession a three-act play, written by Messrs. Cannan and Peacey, which has "a good deal of the Oscar Wilde æsthetic attitudinising and passion for epigram, and is somewhat on the lines of that author's comedy, 'The Importance of Being Earnest.'" When the title of this piece was mentioned by Mr. Irving as being "Lord Arthur Saville's Crime," I rubbed my eyes and asked myself, "Can it be that 'H. B.' is not aware that this is the title of one of Wilde's best known short stories, and that presumably the piece must be an adaptation of it?" The announcement in question served to remind me that I had yet to deal with a certain section, I believe the section which will live longest, of Oscar Wilde's works. In Messrs. Methuen's handsome collected edition these occupy two volumes, being respectively entitled "Lord Arthur Saville's Crime and Other Pieces" and "A House of Pomegranates and Other Tales," and along with "The Picture of Dorian Grey," issued by Mr. Charles Charrington from Paris in a uniform shape, they contain all the prose fiction which their author produced. Mr. Irving is right in comparing "Lord Arthur Saville's Crime" with "The Importance of Being Earnest." It is an extravaganza of the most reckless type, with scenes laid in Mayfair and dialogue full of paradox, and its leading idea the attempts, again and again crowned with failure, which a nice boy makes to fulfil the prophecy of a cheiromantist that he will commit murder. The story, however, has a curiously non-moral twist, and I admire much more another tale to be found in the same volume and styled "The Portrait of Mr. W. H."

This exploits in the most ingenious fashion, with a pretty travesty of scholarship, a theory, a highly fantastic theory, that Shakespeare's Sonnets were dedicated to a boy-actor for whom he wrote the most famous women parts of his plays—Rosalind, Juliet, and the rest—and supposes the boy's name to be Master Will Hughes. But this volume also contains a delightful burlesque ghost-story, "The Canterville Ghost," and the memorable and audacious "Poems in Prose." The companion volume is made up of tales more or less designed for children's reading, and here I think we find Oscar Wilde's talent in its most charming, because in its simplest, form. Hans Andersen never wrote a more touching or beautiful story than "The Happy Prince," and only less good are "The Birthday of the Infanta" and "The Young King." The one flaw in them is the affection their author betrays for costly and luxurious things; here, as elsewhere, he shows himself scarcely fond of beauty unadorned. But that one mark of artificiality apart, the art of them is perfect, the fancy delicate, the phrasing fastidiously correct. Compared with them, "Dorian Grey" is but a *tour de force* in morbidity, interesting mainly because it gave a forecast to some extent of Oscar Wilde's own eclipse.

F. G. BETTANY.