



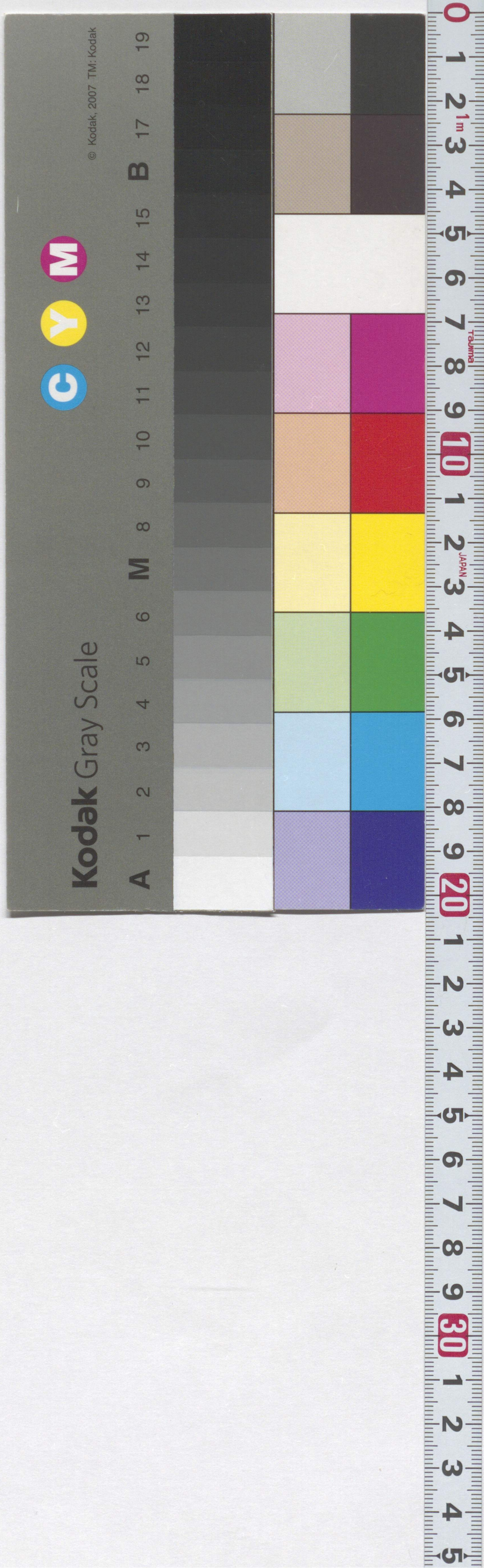
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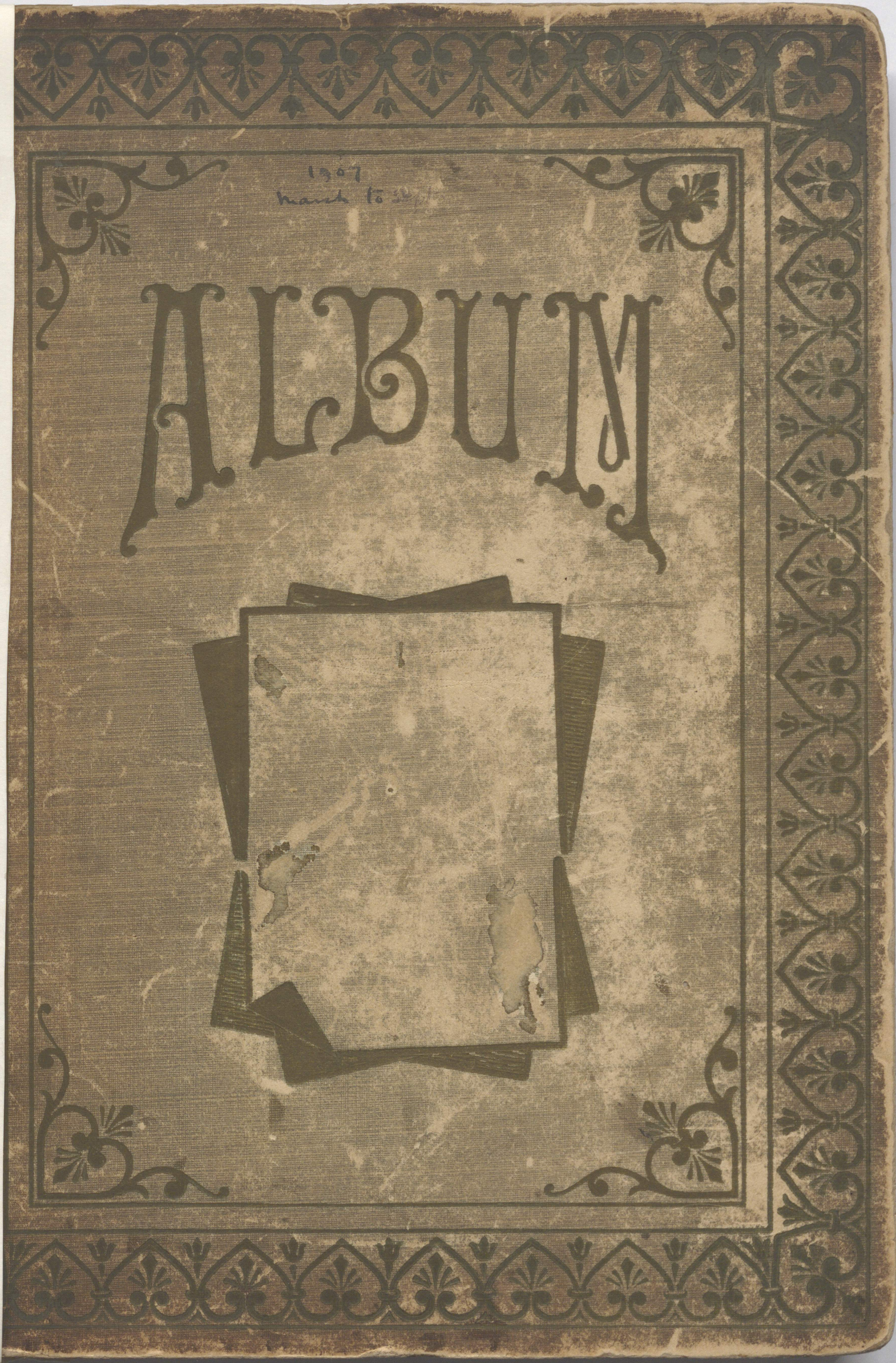
Oscar Wilde  
Scrapbook

Vol. 9





The Mason Library 第九集





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He was never a great man in the sense in which a Gladstone, a Lincoln or a Jefferson was great, but a good man he ever was and left behind him a clean record. It was thought by many that he was cold, in fact so much so that the wags took delight in making jokes at his expense on his lack of enthusiasm, but to those who knew him best he was warm-hearted and kindly.

As the closing sentence of the peroration on the life of a man who is intended to be a beacon light of inspiration to the young men of his country, this noble if tempered eulogium strikes us as a bit flabby. We have, in fact, known books of the kind better done.

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ACADEMY

APRIL 20, 1907



Eastern Morning

News. 18 June 07

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ROWLAND STROM

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LAST week I called attention to the excellent service by "that benign pirate," Mr. Mosher, in connection with "The Blessed Damozel." I hope readers of the *ACA* will not think that I have got an interest in Mr. Mosher or that I am paid for doing it, for I find myself obliged to refer to him again. If they do I shall even have the consolation of being buoyed up by a sense of guilt. But really what is one to do? Here Mr. Mosher bringing out a beautiful edition of "Underneath the Bough," a book of verses by Michael Field and as a foreword to the book the author writes as follows:

For some years my work has been done for the "younger generation"—not yet knocking at the door, but awaited with well-meaning readers from further England—if they will pardon me—classing them—have given me that joy of listening denied to my own island.

Wilde, the great satirist, has left us a better than "The Importance of Being Earnest," which is being produced at the Theatre Royal this week. It is brilliant, in its conception and in its presentation. It is fully twelve years since the play was first produced in Hull, and yet its sparkle and biting satire seem to have a freshness about them as if they had been newly written. Epigrams, pert and saucy, and the audience is kept in a roar of laughter.

Worthing, J.P., has a weakness for women, and amongst his friends he counts on Moncrieff, a young gentleman who is much of woman's way by being pinned to his aunt's apron. He acts as the musical director at receptions, and becomes rather bored with repeated invitations to his aunt's pretty and winsome cousin, Gwendoline. Gwendoline wins the heart of Mr Worthing, but his flirtation has led him to adopt the name of Ernest, and he finds that Gwendoline thinks the name simply divine. He is upon the happy idea of having a ring made, so that he can literally "ring the bell" with his names, Ernest and John. Gwendoline, overhearing a conversation between Worthing and Gwendoline, is so much impressed by the name that she impersonates Ernest, and goes down to his friend's residence for the purpose of relieving himself of the obligation of dining with him, and of indulging in a little flirtation with Worthing's ward, Cicely. And it is at the most amusing situation arises, finding that it is inconvenient to her brother named Ernest, resolves to go to his country residence in deep and apparently sorely distressed and sudden bereavement. Unhappily for him, his friend Algernon arrives, and has already won the heart of Gwendoline, who finds that she is also engaged to Ernest Worthing. It is here that the author, believing in the motto, "Every playwright his own sumner up his own opinion of the play," says: "The first act is ingenious, and beautiful, the third abominably bad, and no one will quarrel with him. The second is undoubtedly clever—abominable. Gwendoline's mother has refused to give her to Mr Worthing on her 'list of young men' because of the mystery of her parentage. He knows not whether or mother, but remembers that found as a baby in a handbox in the street at Victoria Station. Exactly how to be placed there is smartly told, and forms one of the most clever developments of the play. Those who go to the Royal—and they are many—would not thank us for unearthing the secret—it comes as such a surprise.

It is exceedingly gratifying to have an opportunity of witnessing the revival of such a capable company as that of Monckton Hoffe, who is himself the life of the play by his naturalness in the role of Algernon. Mr Hoffe is adroit, and, like Miss Minnie Grey as Gwendoline, speaks the sparkling satire with the force of the author's meaning. Gwendoline is shocked to find that parents have little respect for their children that enters the room just as Worthing is in a half-reclining position proposing to Mr C. J. Nicholson is happily cast as Worthing, and Miss Heston Newton is a clever and successful as Lady Bracknell and Miss Spectator. The play is preceded by "A Queen's Messenger," which smacks of melodrama.

Adelphi June 15. 1907

GLASGOW.

Importance of Being Earnest," a typical attraction at the King's Theatre this season, it should prove a success in this city. It is preceded by a one-act play, "A Queen's Messenger."

Hull Mail 18 June.

## BEFORE THE FOOTLIGHTS

### "THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST"

AT THE "ROYAL."

Good work cannot be buried, and a play such as "The Importance of Being Earnest," which is of epigrams all compact, is certain to be treasured on the stage for years to come. It has been seen in Hull once before—12 years ago—and last night it was presented by a most capable company, the different members of which brought out all its points, no easy thing to do when smart sayings follow one another almost with the rapidity of a discharge from a Maxim gun. There is a plot which serves to string the author's witticisms and satire upon, but it does not greatly matter. "The Importance of Being Earnest" is a framework on which he displays his lambent wit. One point of the plot stands out, however, as exquisitely funny. It is that the hero, if such he can be called, of the play is put by his nurse in a handbag and left in a cloakroom, from which he is handed to a rich gentleman with a season ticket to Worthing, and who on that account bestows that name upon the foundling. When the child reaches 35, and is about to marry, the mother of the carefully brought up young lady on whom his affections are lighted, not unnaturally does not consider a cloakroom a satisfactory substitute for a family mansion, or a handbag for a reputable parent. This, however, is by the way, the attraction of the play consisting in the morbid and occasionally perverse forms of wit in which the author indulges, and which would easily fill half a column of newspaper space.

Mr Monckton Hoffe (whose company appears) as capital as the sublimely concealed Algy, and Mr Nicholson as the rich foundling, Mr Worthing, plays up to him well. Miss Phyllis Manners is the elderly and would-be debonnaire Lady Brackwell, a success, and the two younger ladies, the Hon. Gwendoline Fairfax and Cicely Cardew are satisfactorily taken by Miss Minnie Grey and Miss Hester Newton. Miss Amy Lloyd-Desmond is clever in the ungrateful role of Miss Prism. The one-act drama, "A Queen's Messenger," which serves as a curtain raiser, affords an opportunity for the display of marked dramatic skill on the part of Mr Nicholson, the manager, and Miss Nona Hope, a masked lady, who is a secret emissary of the Russian Embassy, and who tries to rob the Messenger of his confidential papers. She succeeds in deceiving and drugging him, but struck by his fine and manly spirit turns from her purpose and so saves him from destruction. It is a telling play, well rendered.

Adelphi June 15. 1907

## DRAMA

### REMINISCENCES OF THE STAGE.

*The Art of the Victorian Stage.* By Alfred Darbyshire. (Sherratt & Hughes.)—We are inclined to take exception to the title on the ground that it is somewhat misleading. It promises much, for to the casual reader it suggests a complete survey of the conditions and progress of stagecraft during the Victorian era. As a matter of fact, beyond a slight excursion into the history of the stage from the Elizabethan period until the present day, Mr. Darbyshire confines himself mainly to his personal experiences and relations with the various actors and actresses with whom he has been brought in contact. Moreover, so far from being a true guide to the state of the Victorian drama and the conditions under which dramatic art laboured during the period in question, Mr. Darbyshire is inclined to devote himself, in the main, to Shakspearean drama and its various exponents, with a consequent tendency to ignore contemporary playwrights. The work would more properly be described as a record of Shakspearean drama from the time when Charles Kean assumed the management of the Princess's Theatre in 1850 until Henry Irving relinquished the management of the Lyceum.

On this subject the author is an enthusiast, with all an enthusiast's bias for his favourite dramatist. That the English stage begins

and ends with Shakspeare is evidently his opinion, although he does not actually express himself in so many words. He has a whole-souled predilection in favour of appropriate and gorgeous stage setting; he endeavours to prove at some length that Shakspeare wrote to be acted and not to be read, and Cardinal Wiseman is cited as an example of one who read the plays with enthusiasm, and deplored the fact that he had never in his life seen Shakspeare acted. The poet himself is quoted for evidence that he intended his plays to be produced in as fitting a manner as possible; witness the following apologies, from 'Henry V.,' for the primitive methods of production in those days:—

But pardon, gentles all,  
The flat unraised spirits that have dared  
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth  
So great an object: can this cockpit hold  
The vasty fields of France? or may we cram  
Within this wooden O the very casques  
That did affright the air at Agincourt?

And again:—

Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;  
Into a thousand parts divide one man,  
And make imaginary puissance;  
Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them  
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth;  
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings.

These passages, however, refer to the inevitable limits of the stage rather than to details of scenery and display.

For Charles Calvert and Henry Irving the author has the keenest admiration, and enjoyed a close friendship with the two men, whose perseverance and genius enabled them—the one in Manchester, and the other in the metropolis—to raise the status of the actor to a new eminence, and to enhance in a corresponding degree the reputation of the playhouse.

Of Helen Faucit and Ristori Mr. Darbyshire has many laudatory reminiscences, the most interesting anecdote of the former being that told in connexion with the Calvert Memorial performance of 'As You Like It,' in which the author took part, and for which event Helen Faucit was induced to emerge from her retirement, and once again delight playgoers as Rosalind.

In his defence of interpolated silent scenes or tableaux in classic drama Mr. Darbyshire is at issue with those who hold that such scenes are inadmissible, as not being intended by the author, or obstructing the action of the play. In extenuation of the practice he says, in effect, that as no word is uttered, no attempt is thereby made to improve on the dramatist, and that furthermore the scenes themselves simply place in pictorial form what would otherwise have to be imagined.

The art of the Victorian drama as applied to the plays of Shakspeare is so ably dealt with that it is a matter of regret that the author has not thought fit to deal seriously with contemporary playwrights. Mr. Pinero, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, Mr. Carr, Mr. Barrie, Sir Conan Doyle, Sir Gilbert Parker, Mr. Louis N. Parker, and others, as well as the great name of Tennyson are dealt with collectively in a paragraph of less than a dozen lines. Oscar Wilde and Mr. Bernard Shaw do not appear to be worthy of mention at all, though they have made more mark in drama than some of the writers just mentioned.

An interesting chapter is that devoted to theatrical architecture, of which the author, in his capacity as an architect, has had considerable practical experience. As to how a theatre should be built Mr. Darbyshire has the clearest convictions, and proclaims them in no uncertain terms.

In spite of its omissions and defects Mr. Darbyshire's book is interesting and at times absorbing, being written in an easy style, which is attractive.

## Athenæum.

MR. LEONARD CRESSWELL INGLEBY is publishing with Mr. Werner Laurie shortly 'Oscar Wilde: a Literary Appreciation.' The book gives a general account and detailed criticisms of his works.



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He was never a great man in the sense in which a Gladstone, a Lincoln or a Jefferson was great, but a good man he ever was and left behind him a clean record. It was thought by many that he was cold, in fact so much so that the wags took delight in making jokes at his expense on his lack of enthusiasm, but to those who knew him best he was warm-hearted and kindly.

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It is exceedingly gratifying to have an opportunity of witnessing the revival of the play by such a capable company as that of the Epsom 'Hoffe', who is himself the life of the play by his naturalness in the impersonation of Algernon. Mr Hoffe is admirable, and, like Miss Minnie Grey as Gwendoline, speaks the sparkling satire with the force of the author's meaning. Gwendoline is shocked to find that parents have so little respect for their children that she enters the room just as Worthing is in a "half-recumbent" position proposing to her. Mr C. J. Nicholson is happily cast as Ernest Worthing, and Miss Heston Newton is a perfect Cecily. Mr Ralph Hutton is at home in clerical garb, and Miss Phyllis Lloyd and Miss Amy Lloyd-Desmond are successful as Lady Bracknell and Miss Prism respectively. The play is preceded by "A Queen's Mess", which smacks of melodrama.



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# "THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST"

## AT THE "ROYAL."

Good work cannot be buried, and a play such as "The Importance of Being Earnest," which is of epigrams all compact, is certain to be treasured on the stage for years to come. It has been seen in Hull once before—12 years ago—and last night it was presented by a most capable company, the different members of which brought out all its points, no easy thing to do when smart sayings follow one another almost with the rapidity of a discharge from a Maxim gun. There is a plot which serves to string the author's vitticisms and satire upon, but it does not greatly matter. "The Importance of Being Earnest" is a framework on which he displays his lambent wit. One point of the plot stands out, however, as exquisitely funny. It is that the hero, if such he can be called, of the play is put by his nurse in a handbag and left in a cloakroom, from which he is handed to a rich gentleman with a season ticket to Worthing, and who on that account bestows that name upon the foundling. When the child reaches 35, and is about to marry, the mother of the carefully brought up young lady on whom his affections light not unnaturally does not consider a cloakroom a satisfactory substitute for a family mansion, or a handbag for a reputable parent. This, however, is by the way, the attraction of the play consisting in the morrant and occasionally perverse forms of wit in which the author indulges, and which would easily fill half a column of newspaper space.

Mr Monckton Hoffe (whose company appears) is capital as the sublimely conceited Algy, and Mr Nicholson as the rich foundling, Mr Worthing, plays up to him well. Miss Phyllis Manners is the elderly and would-be debonnaire Lady Brackwell is a success, and the two younger ladies, the Hon. Gwendoline Fairfax and Cicely Cardew are satisfactorily taken by Miss Minnie Grey and Miss Hester Newton. Miss Amy Lloyd-Desmond is clever in the ungrateful role of Miss Prism.

The one-act drama, "A Queen's Messenger," which serves as a curtain raiser, affords an opportunity for the display of marked dramatic skill on the part of Mr Nicholson, the manager, and Miss Nona Hope, a masked lady, who is a secret emissary of the Russian Embassy, and who tries to rob the Messenger of his confidential papers. She succeeds in deceiving and drugging him, but struck by his fine and manly spirit turns from her purpose and so saves him from destruction. It is a telling play, well rendered.

and ends with Shakspeare is evidently his opinion, although he does not actually express himself in so many words. He has a whole-souled predilection in favour of appropriate and gorgeous stage setting; he endeavours to prove at some length that Shakspeare wrote to be acted and not to be read, and Cardinal Wiseman is cited as an example of one who read the plays with enthusiasm, and deplored the fact that he had never in his life seen Shakspeare acted. The poet himself is quoted for evidence that he intended his plays to be produced in as fitting a manner as possible; witness the following apologies, from 'Henry V.,' for the primitive methods of production in those days:—

But pardon, gentles all,  
The flat unraised spirits that have dared  
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth  
So great an object: can this cockpit hold  
The vasty fields of France? or may we cram  
Within this wooden O the very casques  
That did affright the air at Agincourt?

And again:—

Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;  
Into a thousand parts divide one man,  
And make imaginary pussions;  
Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them  
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth;  
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings.

These passages, however, refer to the inevitable limits of the stage rather than to details of scenery and display.

For Charles Calvert and Henry Irving the author has the keenest admiration, and enjoyed a close friendship with the two men, whose perseverance and genius enabled them—the one in Manchester, and the other in the metropolis—to raise the status of the actor to a new eminence, and to enhance in a corresponding degree the reputation of the playhouse.

Of Helen Faucit and Ristori Mr. Darbyshire has many laudatory reminiscences, the most interesting anecdote of the former being that told in connexion with the Calvert Memorial performance of 'As You Like It,' in which the author took part, and for which event Helen Faucit was induced to emerge from her retirement, and once again delight playgoers as Rosalind.

In his defence of interpolated silent scenes or tableaux in classic drama Mr. Darbyshire is at issue with those who hold that such scenes are inadmissible, as not being intended by the author, or obstructing the action of the play. In extenuation of the practice he says, in effect, that as no word is uttered, no attempt is thereby made to improve on the dramatist, and that furthermore the scenes themselves simply place in pictorial form what would otherwise have to be imagined.

The art of the Victorian drama as applied to the plays of Shakspeare is so ably dealt with that it is a matter of regret that the author has not thought fit to deal seriously with contemporary playwrights. Mr. Pinero, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, Mr. Carr, Mr. Barrie, Sir Conan Doyle, Sir Gilbert Parker, Mr. Louis N. Parker, and others, as well as the great name of Tennyson are dealt with collectively in a paragraph of less than a dozen lines. Oscar Wilde and Mr. Bernard Shaw do not appear to be worthy of mention at all, though they have made more mark in drama than some of the writers just mentioned.

An interesting chapter is that devoted to theatrical architecture, of which the author, in his capacity as an architect, has had considerable practical experience. As to how a theatre should be built Mr. Darbyshire has the clearest convictions, and proclaims them in no uncertain terms.

In spite of its omissions and defects Mr. Darbyshire's book is interesting and at times absorbing, being written in an easy style, which is attractive.

## DRAMA

### REMINISCENCES OF THE STAGE.

*The Art of the Victorian Stage.* By Alfred Darbyshire. (Sherratt & Hughes.)—We are inclined to take exception to the title on the ground that it is somewhat misleading. It promises much, for to the casual reader it suggests a complete survey of the conditions and progress of stagecraft during the Victorian era. As a matter of fact, beyond a slight excursion into the history of the stage from the Elizabethan period until the present day, Mr. Darbyshire confines himself mainly to his personal experiences and relations with the various actors and actresses with whom he has been brought in contact. Moreover, so far from being a true guide to the state of the Victorian drama and the conditions under which dramatic art laboured during the period in question, Mr. Darbyshire is inclined to devote himself, in the main, to Shakspearean drama and its various exponents, with a consequent tendency to ignore contemporary playwrights. The work would more properly be described as a record of Shakspearean drama from the time when Charles Kean assumed the management of the Princess's Theatre in 1850 until Henry Irving relinquished the management of the Lyceum.

On this subject the author is an enthusiast, with all an enthusiast's bias for his favourite dramatist. That the English stage begins

Athenæum.

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Athenæum June 15 1907

June 22 1907



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"A Woman of No Importance" at His Majesty's.—All who love epigram and smart repartee will be interested in the revival of "A Woman of No Importance" which Mr. Tree has placed upon the boards of His Majesty's Theatre. The late Mr. Oscar Wilde's claim to cleverness has never been denied him, and of his many striking plays this is, perhaps, the one which best manifests this undoubted ability. The first act is mainly concerned with "bon mots" and epigrammatic remarks such as the oft-quoted one: "The book of life begins with a man and a woman in a garden—and finishes with revelations," and they are much enjoyed by the audience. A very

strong cast has been collected to do justice to this clever comedy. With the cynical and hard-hearted Lord Illingsworth we have little sympathy, though Mr. Tree makes him a very polished gentleman and ever so amusing; but for poor Mrs. Arbuthnot, the injured and sweet lady who has suffered on his account, we feel much concern. This part brings out the sweet womanly qualities which Miss Marion Terry knows so well how to portray. A very clever piece of acting is given by Mrs. Calvert, who makes the untidy and absent-minded Lady Hunstanton a very real life study. We hear so much nowadays about the sins of smart society, that this play which brings out the callous worldliness of up-to-date smartness is likely to prove very welcome sauce to many palates.

### Musical Opinion June 1907.

RICHARD STRAUSS's remarkable operatic setting of Oscar Wilde's "Salomé" has been the subject of much controversy. Mr. Lawrence Gilman has just published (John Lane: 3s. 6d.), a little volume on the opera which is mainly expository. He gives the outline of Wilde's story and hints of Strauss's music. The ethical questions raised by the work are not discussed. Those, of course, who believe in art for art's sake, justify Strauss's treatment of the story of the Daughter of Herodias who danced before Herod, by the contention that art has nothing to do with morals. They would separate the man from the artist. But, as a well known critic has asked, does anyone imagine that the sensation seeking crowds in New York went to the first performance of "Salomé" for artistic reasons; that they took

the artist with them to the theatre and left the man at home? Is it not rather true that, for the majority, the "art" of Wilde and of Strauss counted as little or nothing; that for the New Yorkers "Salomé" offered food somewhat similar to the Thaw case?

### Glasgow Evening Times June 25

### DRAMATIC & MUSICAL.

#### What's Doing at Theatres and Music-Halls.

The late Oscar Wilde's smartly-written comedy, "The Importance of Being Earnest," which was originally produced at the St James's Theatre, London, eleven years ago, provides the attraction at the King's Theatre. It is preceded by a one-act drama, "A Queen's Messenger."

Mr. Alfred Darbyshire is an architect, and not the least interesting chapter of his book, "The Art of the Victorian Stage," is that which deals with theatrical architecture. Regarding this he has as decided opinions as he has on the mounting and setting of plays. He has no enthusiasm for the simplicity that is urged by some critics, and he quotes from Shakespeare's "Henry V." an extract which he claims goes to prove that Shakespeare himself would have preferred more luxury than the Elizabethan stage had at its command. The passages are as follows:—

"But pardon, gentle all, the flat unadorned spirit that have dared On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth So great an object; can this cockpit hold The vasty fields of France? or may we cram Within this wooden O the very Caspian? 'Twas did adrift the air at Agincourt!"

The second is:—  
"Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts Into a thousand parts divide one man, And make imaginary puissance; Think when we talk of horses, that you see them Printing their paces on the receiving earth; For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our Kings, For 'tis your thoughts that must make us the men."

It is with the actors and actresses whom Mr. Darbyshire has met that he deals, and he writes most attractively of Charles Kean, Henry Irving, Helen Faucit, Charles Calvert, and Ristori. But the great throng of popular dramatists receive scanty attention. This is the fate of Pinero, of Henry Arthur Jones, of Barrie, of Louis N. Parker, and many others. Oscar Wilde receives no mention at all, while (still more strange) the name of George Bernard Shaw cannot be found in the whole book! Perhaps the best compliment I can pay to Mr. Darbyshire is that I should like to have read what he had to say of these dramatists. He has said enough to make me wish for more.

### Western Gazette (Glasgow) 21 June

Mr. Tree has revived at His Majesty's "A Woman of No Importance," written by Oscar Wilde. It is always interesting in cases of a revival as to whether it will please the audience as it once did or whether our tastes have changed. In some respects there are many things in "A Woman of No Importance" that still hold good, but on the whole the piece is as interesting as ever, full of sparkling witticisms. Miss Marion Terry plays Mrs. Arbuthnot. Her rendering of the part is absolutely beautiful. As her son Gerald Mr. Charles Quatermaine is excellent. Miss Ella Jeffreys as Mrs. Allenby is splendid. As the garrulous Lady Caroline Pontefract, Mrs. Calvert is all one could desire. Mr. Tree is of course, Lord Illingsworth, a part which is thoroughly suited to him. Miss Viola Tree plays extremely well a rather difficult part of an American girl, born humbly. He displayed his humour when he perambulated the country attired in a velvet jacket and knee breeches preaching the philosophic formulas which received their death-blow in "Patience." It was humour which inspired "Dorian Gray," its veneer of emotional aestheticism notwithstanding. But his humour was utilised to best advantage in his four plays, and of these the crown, the masterpiece—so far as humour is concerned—is "The Importance of Being Earnest." This, which was the last of the four, dates from 1895. Taken as a play it really doesn't count for very much. The story is trivial, the characters, well the characters are absurd, and what is more they are meant by their creator to be absurd. They are not characters which have any real resemblance to actual living men and women. However, the dialogue is so sparkling, so cynical, it comes home to us all so sharply, hitting at our weaknesses, our little touches of meanness, our selfishness, our moral cowardice, that it is impossible not to enjoy it. Human nature, at all events the more seamy side of human nature, is laid bare by Wilde in a manner which is at once unparalyzing, grotesque, and altogether enjoyable. Every justice is done to the piece by the company engaged in its representation at the King's Theatre. The leading parts, those of John Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff, are sustained by Mr. C. J. Nicholson and Mr. Monckton Hoffe—Mr. Hoffe is the manager of the company—and sustained with admirable grace and lightness of touch. Other of the performers are Mr. Ralph Hutton, and Misses Phyllis Manners, Hester Newton, and Nora Hope, and all are equal to the demands of their respective characters. A little one-act drama, entitled "A Queen's Messenger," precedes, and serves as a curtain-raiser to "The Importance of Being Earnest."

### Glasgow Record June 26

#### OSCAR WILDE COMEDY.

The plays of the late Oscar Wilde are again coming into favour. Mr. Tree's recent revival of one of them in London was a great success, and there is every ground for supposing that others will soon be witnessed on the Metropolitan stage. In the provinces "The Importance of Being Earnest" is yielding excellent entertainment under the auspices of Mr. Monckton Hoffe, whose specially chosen company interprets the farcical spirit, the brilliant wit and epigrammatic force of this comedy with undoubted effect.

At the Glasgow King's Theatre the company referred to is attracting considerable audiences, who enjoy to the full the author's home thrusts—worthy of Shari dan and likely to rank with his in classic interest—at the Society of the Inner and of the century. Nothing could be more amusing than the ripple of fun that sustains the action, and the manner in which the Gilbertian method is adapted to the exigencies of the story throughout is provocative of the healthiest merriment.

### Entertainments.

#### KING'S THEATRE.

"THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST."—After an interval of several years, the playgoers of Glasgow have an opportunity of enjoying an Oscar Wilde comedy at the King's. It is typical of the man and his writings, smart, cynical, epigrammatic, and topsy-turvy as any Gilbertian humorous opera. Even the title is whimsical; it is not to be taken as "earnest," but as "Ernest," the name which the two would-be brides will have as that of their future husbands and none other. Of course, it deals with life in society—the society with the very big S. One intended bridegroom has between £7000 and £8000 a year, and although the other has "nothing but his debts," as his practical aunt puts it, his fiancée has £130,000. Naturally in such company we hear a great deal about society and its deeds and misdeeds from the main topic of the sarcastic conversation in which the various personages in the comedy indulge. The complications and the dialogue are delightfully amusing, and there was a continuous ripple of laughter through the auditorium from the rising of the curtain until the going down thereof. The Wilde humour loses nothing of its pungent flavour as it flows from the mouths of these speakers. Mr. Monckton Hoffe (the organiser of the company) and Mr. C. J. Nicholson, as the two very much up-to-date lovers; Misses Hester Newton and Nora Hope, as the beloved; Miss Phyllis Manners, as the calculating matron; the avenger; Miss Lloyd-Desmond, as the severe and scornful governess; and Mr. Ralph Hutton, as the rector for whom she has such a strange fascination, are a company of players who act naturally and speak as if their sayings were spontaneous. The principal piece is preceded by a dramatic playlet, "A Queen's Messenger," by J. Hartley Manners, realistically performed by Mr. Nicholson and Miss Hope.

#### ENTERTAINMENTS.

##### KING'S THEATRE.

A treat is in store at the King's Theatre this week for all who care for witty stage dialogue and amusing stage situations. These are qualities we are accustomed to associate, and rightly so, with the works of Mr. Gilbert. However, they are also the prevailing qualities of "The Importance of Being Earnest," an Oscar Wilde comedy, which is being played at the King's Theatre. Oscar Wilde was a born humourist. He displayed his humour when he perambulated the country attired in a velvet jacket and knee breeches preaching the philosophic formulas which received their death-blow in "Patience." It was humour which inspired "Dorian Gray," its veneer of emotional aestheticism notwithstanding. But his humour was utilised to best advantage in his four plays, and of these the crown, the masterpiece—so far as humour is concerned—is "The Importance of Being Earnest." This, which was the last of the four, dates from 1895. Taken as a play it really doesn't count for very much. The story is trivial, the characters, well the characters are absurd, and what is more they are meant by their creator to be absurd. They are not characters which have any real resemblance to actual living men and women. However, the dialogue is so sparkling, so cynical, it comes home to us all so sharply, hitting at our weaknesses, our little touches of meanness, our selfishness, our moral cowardice, that it is impossible not to enjoy it. Human nature, at all events the more seamy side of human nature, is laid bare by Wilde in a manner which is at once unparalyzing, grotesque, and altogether enjoyable. Every justice is done to the piece by the company engaged in its representation at the King's Theatre. The leading parts, those of John Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff, are sustained by Mr. C. J. Nicholson and Mr. Monckton Hoffe—Mr. Hoffe is the manager of the company—and sustained with admirable grace and lightness of touch. Other of the performers are Mr. Ralph Hutton, and Misses Phyllis Manners, Hester Newton, and Nora Hope, and all are equal to the demands of their respective characters. A little one-act drama, entitled "A Queen's Messenger," precedes, and serves as a curtain-raiser to "The Importance of Being Earnest."

sidered he should have been awarded a flint arrow-head, but as there was a moderate majority on the council, the motion for the grant was lost by one vote. Certain ill-feeling was engendered. And to cut a short story shorter he was the ancestor of all old-fashioned people. Who will deny that such a venerable pedigree does entitle the family to be represented by dramatic critics? The cackling geese are still guardians of the Capitol and safely preserve us from any attempt at Gallic or Norwegian invasion, of a dramatic kind; and Mr. Redford is always there with anserine watchfulness to give the alarm. It is right that they should be stupid and old-fashioned. But it is the ignorance of the dramatic critics to which I take exception.

A short time ago the Stage Society produced *Les Hanneçons* of Brieux. You would have thought that the meaning of the play was made sufficiently clear by the superb interpretation of the actors; or if they failed to convey any meaning to ears long inured to the blameless dramas of Mr. Sutro and Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, a reference to a natural history book and a French dictionary would have given them the explanation for which they are at a loss. Yet they nearly all declared of this bitter little comedy that its moral purpose was to show that an irregular *ménage* leads to unhappiness! And some of them added reflections on the superiority of wedlock! Now was this astonishing opinion due to delicacy, to hypocrisy, to stupidity or to ignorance? They praised the play, to do them justice; and they praised the acting. I am inclined to think that in most cases it was due to virginal ignorance and incapacity. If this is the case it is a tribute to their private lives. On reflection I hesitate to invite Mr. Tree to corrupt them with the fruits of his namesake. But it is the untruthfulness generated by ignorance to which I take exception.

The brilliant revival of *Patience* has served as an occasion for a deliberate perversion of facts. *Patience*, we are told by one critic, is a kindly satire which effectually killed æstheticism. Another critic expressed mild surprise, not very complimentary to Mr. W. S. Gilbert, that the opera had lost nothing of its piquancy although æstheticism meant nothing to this generation! Another refers to the *lash* of Mr. Gilbert's satire which drove the æsthetic movement and all it meant into obscurity. Another of them recorded that it put an end to the "extravagant worship of the beautiful roused in the bosom of some foolish people by the successful posturing" of the original of Archibald Grosvenor. There were, however, a few honorable exceptions; notably the *Times* critic who pointed out acutely that one of the reasons that *Patience* amused us now is due to the fact that æstheticism is still a living force in our literature and art. But most of the critics spoke as if they were critics twenty-six years ago. Probably they were. The thoughts of the dramatic critics to-day are the grandchildren of their wishes at the time. They are as false and illusive now as then.

When I think of the men who were rightly branded as æsthetes—Morris, Pater, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Whistler, and Mr. Swinburne, some of whom never came into their own until long after *Patience* had ceased to run—I am amazed at the ignorance and the falsehoods of these old gentlemen. *Patience* is one of the most delightful and beautiful satires ever composed. I should not call it "kindly," but that is a matter of opinion. I am only concerned with dull facts. Bunthorne, the fleshly poet, was a combined caricature of Whistler and Mr. Swinburne, whose seventieth birthday has been recently celebrated in the papers (and I hope in the hearts of every educated man and woman in England). To the great painter of *Miss Alexander* a statue by Rodin is about to be placed on the Chelsea Embankment. At the Tate Gallery may be seen the beautiful *Cophetua* of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, whose feminine types were burlesqued in the *Patience* chorus. I refer the dramatic critics to Christie's catalogues for the record prices fetched by his pictures

some fifteen years after *Patience* was produced. I refer them to any bookseller for a list of rather dreary books on the great painter and poet Rossetti, and to the wonderful collection of drawings at Birmingham. On the outside of the new Victoria and Albert Museum there has been recently erected a grotesque image of William Morris, which must be intended to illustrate the line "Oh! South Kensington" in Mr. Gilbert's text. Finally, I would remind the critics that Mr. Archibald Grosvenor, who at the end of the opera discarded æsthetic costume, became some years after the first of English playwrights. And I shall be reminded that he was afterwards put in prison. In Germany, rightly or wrongly, he is considered the peer of the other æsthetes, and one of his works is the most discussed drama in Europe. Its operatic form has turned American journalism into a colosseum. In a short time Messrs. Methuen will be bringing out I understand a uniform edition of "Mr. Grosvenor's" works. But it will be very expensive, and, I fear, above the purse and the intelligence of the average dramatic critic.

CHRISTIAN FREEBORN.  
R. H. ROSS.

### DRAMA

#### REALISM AT THE COURT

"A MAN should know either everything or nothing—which do you know?" says Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. "I know nothing," Lady Bracknell," replies Mr. Alexander, after an instant's hesitation. This quotation came into my mind as the result of spending the greater part of last Tuesday at the Court Theatre. The afternoon was consecrated to the performance of Miss Elizabeth Robins's "Dramatic tract," *Votes for Women!*, the evening to the revival of Mr. John Galsworthy's *Silver Box*, originally given at a series of *matinées* at the same theatre last autumn. After witnessing these two plays I feel, with Lady Bracknell, that a man should know either everything or nothing—especially if he (or she) intends to write for the stage. "Ignorance is a delicate exotic plant. Touch it and the bloom is gone." Mr. Galsworthy when he wrote *The Silver Box* seems to have had the incomparable advantage of knowing nothing. Nothing of the theatre, I mean. His knowledge of life and character and the springs of human action was extensive and profound, but of the contemporary stage, unless I am greatly mistaken, he was entirely ignorant. In fact it would not surprise me to learn that he had never seen any modern play at all except *The Voysey Inheritance*. The result was that he approached the writing of his own play without any hampering recollections of how the other fellows would have done it. He had certain characters whom he wished to represent in certain relations. He looked about for a series of situations which should allow those characters to reveal themselves to us and just pitched them on to the stage without bothering about niceties of "construction." He divided his first act into three scenes by dropping the curtain to indicate the flight of time. The critics shook their heads and murmured "Very bad technique." When an English dramatic critic talks about technique you may be tolerably certain he is going to talk nonsense. Again he dropped his curtain in the middle of Act II., accompanying it this time with a change of scene, "Worse and worse!" murmured the critics. In the third act the first ten or more minutes were devoted to the question whether two little girls, whom we had never heard of before and whose names we never know, should or should not be removed from the care of their father and handed over to that of a philanthropic society. Only after this little matter had been disposed of were we permitted to resume the thread of the story and plunge once more into the adventures of the principal characters. "Dreadful!" said the critics.

#### THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

THAT benign pirate, Mr. Thomas Mosher, of Portland Maine, performed a great service to literature when he published in a beautiful little book the original text, as it appeared in "The Germ," of "The Blessed Damozel," together with all the emendations made by Rossetti between the appearance of the poem in "The Germ," in 1850, and 1886, when it finally assumed its form as we now know it. Mrs. E. Grant Richards has recently published a little book called "Early Poems of Dante Gabriel Rossetti," in which the original "Germ" text is reproduced; but this strikes one as being not quite fair to the poet, who for nearly forty years went on changing and always improving this wonderful poem, which, if not admittedly Rossetti's masterpiece, has certainly serious claims to be so considered. Oscar Wilde in the course of a controversy carried on in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, in the early 'nineties, made use of the phrase, "no artist improves. The artist revolves in a cycle of masterpieces, the first of which is no less perfect than the last." On being congratulated by a friend on having written "a

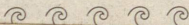


Bowdoin June 1907

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# Glasgow Evening Citizen.

June 8

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Mr Alfred Darbyshire is an architect, and not the least interesting chapter of his book, "The Art of the Victorian Stage," is that which deals with theatrical architecture. Regarding this he has as decided opinions as he has on the mounting and setting of plays. He has no enthusiasm for the simplicity that is urged by some critics, and he quotes from Shakespeare's "Henry V." an extract which he claims goes to prove that Shakespeare himself would have preferred more luxury than the Elizabethan stage had at its command. The passages are as follows:—

But pardon, gentles all,  
The flat unraised spirits that have dared  
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth  
So great an object: can this cockpit hold  
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It is with the actors and actresses whom Mr Darbyshire has met that he deals, and he writes most attractively of Charles Kean, Henry Irving, Helen Faucit, Charles Calvert, and Ristori. But the great throng of popular dramatists receive scanty attention. This is the fate of Pinero, of Henry Arthur Jones, of Barrie, of Louis N. Parker, and many others. Oscar Wilde receives no mention at all, while (still more strange) the name of George Bernard Shaw cannot be found in the whole book! Perhaps the best compliment I can pay to Mr Darbyshire is that I should like to have read what he had to say of the women. He has said enough to make me wish for more.



Glasgow Evening Times  
25 June

# Entertainments.

## KING'S THEATRE.

"THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST."—After an interval of several years, the playgoers of Glasgow have an opportunity of enjoying an Oscar Wilde comedy at the King's. It is typical of the man and his writings, smart, synical, epigrammatic, and topsy-turvical as any Gilbertian humorous opera. Even the title is whimsical; it is not to be taken as "earnest," but as "Ernest," the name which the two would-be brides will have as that of their future husbands and none other. Of course, it deals with life in society—the society with the very big S. One intended bridegroom has between £7000 and £8000 a year, and although the other has "nothing but his debts," as his practical aunt puts it, his fiancée has £130,000. Naturally in such company we hear a great deal about society and its deeds and misdeeds from the main topic of the sarcastic conversation in which the various personages in the comedy indulge. The complications and the dialogue are delightfully amusing, and there was a continuous ripple of laughter through the auditorium from the rising of the curtain until the going down thereof. The Wilde humour loses nothing of its pungent flavour as it flows from the mouths of these speakers. Mr Monckton Hoffe (the organiser of the company) and Mr C. J. Nicholson, as the two very much up-to-date lovers; Misses Hester Newton and Nora Hope, as the beloved; Miss Phyllis Manners, as the calculating matrimony avenger; Miss Amy Lloyd-Desmond, as the severe and learned governess; and Mr Ralph Hutton, as the rector for whom she has such a strange fascination, are a company of players who act naturally and speak as if their sayings were spontaneous. The principal piece is preceded by a dramatic playlet, "A Queen's Messenger," which is realistically performed by Mr Nicholson and Miss Hope.



Musical Opinion. June 1907.

RICHARD STRAUSS'S remarkable operatic setting of Oscar Wilde's "Salomé" has been the subject of much controversy. Mr. Lawrence Gilman has just published (John Lane: 3s. 6d.) a little volume on the opera which is mainly expository. He gives the outline of Wilde's story and hints of Strauss's music. The ethical questions raised by the work are not discussed. Those, of course, who believe in art for art's sake, justify Strauss's treatment of the story of the Daughter of Herodias who danced before Herod, by the contention that art has nothing to do with morals. They would separate the man from the artist. But, as a well known critic has asked, does anyone imagine that the sensation seeking crowds in New York went to the first performance of "Salomé" for artistic reasons ; that they took

the artist with them to the theatre and left the man at home? Is it not rather true that, for the majority, the "art" of Wilde and of Strauss counted as little or nothing ; that for the New Yorkers "Salomé" offered food somewhat similar to the Thaw case?

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Western Gazette (Ypsil) 21 June

Mr. Tree has revived at His Majesty's "A Woman of No Importance," written by Oscar Wilde. It is always interesting in cases of a revival as to whether it will please the audience as it once did or whether our tastes have changed. In some respects there are many things in "A Woman of No Importance" that pall on one now, but on the whole the piece is as interesting as ever, full of sparkling witticisms. Miss Marion Terry plays Mrs. Arbuthnot. Her rendering of the part is absolutely beautiful. As her son Gerald Mr. Charles Quatermaine is excellent. Miss Ellis Jeffreys as Mrs. Allenby is splendid. As the garrulous Lady Caroline Pontefract Mrs. Charles Calvert is all one could desire. Mr. Tree is, of course, Lord Illingworth, a part which is thoroughly suited to him. Miss Viola Tree plays extremely well a rather difficult part of an American girl. Other parts are well played by Mr. Walter White, Mr. Charles Allen, Mr. Edmund Maurice, Miss Kate Bishop, and Miss Kate Cutler.

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## ENTERTAINMENTS.

### KING'S THEATRE.

A treat is in store at the King's Theatre this week for all who care for witty stage dialogue and amusing stage situations. These are qualities we are accustomed to associate, and rightly so, with the works of Mr Gilbert. However, they are also the prevailing qualities of "The Importance of Being Earnest," an Oscar Wilde comedy, or rather farce, which up till last night had not been seen in Glasgow. Oscar Wilde was a born humourist. He displayed his humour when he perambulated the country attired in a velvet jacket and knee breeches preaching the philosophic formulas which received their death-blow in "Patience." It was humour which inspired "Dorian Gray," its veneer of emotional æstheticism notwithstanding. But his humour was utilised to best advantage in his four plays, and of these the crown, the masterpiece—so far as humour is concerned—is "The Importance of Being Earnest." This, which was the last of the four, dates from 1895. Taken as a play it really doesn't count for very much. The story is trivial, the characters, well the characters are absurd, and what is more they are meant by their creator to be absurd. They are not characters which have any real resemblance to actual, living, men and women. However, the dialogue is so sparkling, so cynical, it comes home to us all so sharply, hitting at our weaknesses, our little touches of meanness, our selfishness, our moral cowardice, that it is impossible not to enjoy it. Human nature, at all events the more seamy side of human nature, is laid bare by Wilde in a manner which is at once unsparring, grotesque, and altogether enjoyable. Every justice is done to the piece by the company engaged in its representation at the King's Theatre. The leading parts, those of John Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff, are sustained by Mr C. J. Nicholson and Mr Monckton Hoffe—Mr Hoffe is the manager of the company—and sustained with admirable grace and lightness of touch. Other of the performers are Mr Ralph Hutton, and Misses Phyllis Manners, Hester Newton, and Nora Hope, and all are equal to the demands of their respective characters. A little one-act drama, entitled "A Queen's Messenger," precedes, and serves as a curtain-raiser to the first scene of "Being Earnest."



London Evening Times. June 25.

## DRAMATIC & MUSICAL.

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### What's Doing at Theatres and Music-Halls.

The late Oscar Wilde's smartly-written comedy, "The Importance of Being Earnest," which was originally produced at the St James's Theatre, London, eleven years ago, provides the attraction of the evening's Theatre. It is preceded by a one-act drama, "A Queen's Messenger."



Glasgow Record - June 26

## OSCAR WILDE COMEDY.

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The plays of the late Oscar Wilde are again coming into favour. Mr. Tree's recent revival of one of them in London was a great success, and there is every ground for supposing that others will soon be witnessed on the Metropolitan stage.

In the provinces a tour of "The Importance of being Earnest" is yielding excellent entertainment under the auspices of Mr. Monckton Hoffe, whose specially chosen company interprets the farcical spirit, the brilliant wit and epigrammatic force of this comedy with undoubted effect.

At the Glasgow King's Theatre the company referred to is attracting considerable audiences, who enjoy to the full the author's home thrusts—worthy of Sheridan and likely to rank with his in classic interest—at the Society of the latter end of the century. Nothing could be more amusing than the ripple of fun that sustains the action, and the manner in which the Gilbertian method is adapted to the exigencies of the story. The result is provocative of the healthiest merriment.



sidered he should have been awarded a flint arrow-head, but as there was a moderate majority on the council, the motion for the grant was lost by one vote. Certain ill-feeling was engendered. And to cut a short story shorter he was the ancestor of all old-fashioned people. Who will deny that such a venerable pedigree does entitle the family to be represented by dramatic critics? The cackling geese are still guardians of the Capitol and safely preserve us from any attempt at Gallic or Norwegian invasion, of a dramatic kind; and Mr. Redford is always there with anserine watchfulness to give the alarm. It is right that they should be stupid and old-fashioned. But it is the ignorance of the dramatic critics to which I take exception.

A short time ago the Stage Society produced *Les Hannelons* of Brieux. You would have thought that the meaning of the play was made sufficiently clear by the superb interpretation of the actors; or if they failed to convey any meaning to ears long inured to the blameless dramas of Mr. Sutro and Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, a reference to a natural history book and a French dictionary would have given them the explanation for which they are at a loss. Yet they nearly all declared of this bitter little comedy that its moral purpose was to show that an irregular *ménage* leads to unhappiness! And some of them added reflections on the superiority of wedlock! Now was this astonishing opinion due to delicacy, to hypocrisy, to stupidity or to ignorance? They praised the play, to do them justice; and they praised the acting. I am inclined to think that in most cases it was due to virginal ignorance and incapacity. If this is the case it is a tribute to their private lives. On reflection I hesitate to invite Mr. Tree to corrupt them with the fruits of his namesake. But it is the untruthfulness generated by ignorance to which I take exception.

The brilliant revival of *Patience* has served as an occasion for a deliberate perversion of facts. *Patience*, we are told by one critic, is a *kindly* satire which effectually killed æstheticism. Another critic expressed mild surprise, not very complimentary to Mr. W. S. Gilbert, that the opera had lost nothing of its piquancy although æstheticism meant nothing to this generation! Another refers to the *lash* of Mr. Gilbert's satire which drove the æsthetic movement and all it meant into obscurity. Another of them recorded that it put an end to the "extravagant worship of the beautiful roused in the bosom of some foolish people by the successful posturing" of the original of Archibald Grosvenor. There were, however, a few honorable exceptions; notably the *Times* critic who pointed out acutely that one of the reasons that *Patience* amused us now is due to the fact that æstheticism is *still* a living force in our literature and art. But most of the critics spoke as if they were critics twenty-six years ago. Probably they were. The thoughts of the dramatic critics to-day are the grandchildren of their wishes at the time. They are as false and illusive now as then.

When I think of the men who were rightly branded as æsthetes—Morris, Pater, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Whistler, and Mr. Swinburne, some of whom never came into their own until long after *Patience* had ceased to run—I am amazed at the ignorance and the falsehoods of these old gentlemen. *Patience* is one of the most delightful and beautiful satires ever composed. I should not call it "kindly," but that is a matter of opinion. I am only concerned with dull facts. Bunthorne, the fleshly poet, was a combined caricature of Whistler and Mr. Swinburne, whose seventieth birthday has been recently celebrated in the papers (and I hope in the hearts of every educated man and woman in England). To the great painter of *Miss Alexander* a statue by Rodin is about to be placed on the Chelsea Embankment. At the Tate Gallery may be seen the beautiful *Cophetua* of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, whose feminine types were burlesqued in the *Patience* chorus. I refer the dramatic critics to Christie's catalogues for the record prices fetched by his pictures

some fifteen years after *Patience* was produced. I refer them to any bookseller for a list of rather dreary books on the great painter and poet Rossetti, and to the wonderful collection of drawings at Birmingham. On the outside of the new Victoria and Albert Museum there has been recently erected a grotesque image of William Morris, which must be intended to illustrate the line "Oh! South Kensington" in Mr. Gilbert's text. Finally, I would remind the critics that Mr. Archibald Grosvenor, who at the end of the opera discarded æsthetic costume, became some years after the first of English playwrights. And I shall be reminded that he was afterwards put in prison. In Germany, rightly or wrongly, he is considered the peer of the other æsthetes, and one of his works is the most discussed drama in Europe. Its operatic form has turned American journalism into a colosseum. In a short time Messrs. Methuen will be bringing out I understand a uniform edition of "Mr. Grosvenor's" works. But it will be very expensive, and, I fear, above the purse and the intelligence of the average dramatic critic.



## DRAMA

## REALISM AT THE COURT

"A MAN should know either everything or nothing—which do you know?" says Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. "I know nothing, Lady Bracknell," replies Mr. Alexander, after an instant's hesitation. This quotation came into my mind as the result of spending the greater part of last Tuesday at the Court Theatre. The afternoon was consecrated to the performance of Miss Elizabeth Robins's "Dramatic tract," *Votes for Women!*, the evening to the revival of Mr. John Galsworthy's *Silver Box*, originally given at a series of *matinées* at the same theatre last autumn. After witnessing these two plays I feel, with Lady Bracknell, that a man should know either everything or nothing—especially if he (or she) intends to write for the stage. "Ignorance is a delicate exotic plant. Touch it and the bloom is gone." Mr. Galsworthy when he wrote *The Silver Box* seems to have had the incomparable advantage of knowing nothing. Nothing of the theatre, I mean. His knowledge of life and character and the springs of human action was extensive and profound, but of the contemporary stage, unless I am greatly mistaken, he was entirely ignorant. In fact it would not surprise me to learn that he had never seen any modern play at all except *The Voysey Inheritance*. The result was that he approached the writing of his own play without any hampering recollections of how the other fellows would have done it. He had certain characters whom he wished to represent in certain relations. He looked about for a series of situations which should allow those characters to reveal themselves to us and just pitched them on to the stage without bothering about niceties of "construction." He divided his first act into three scenes by dropping the curtain to indicate the flight of time. The critics shook their heads and murmured "Very bad technique." When an English dramatic critic talks about technique you may be tolerably certain he is going to talk nonsense. Again he dropped his curtain in the middle of Act ii., accompanying it this time with a change of scene. "Worse and worse!" murmured the critics. In the third act the first ten or more minutes were devoted to the question whether two little girls, whom we had never heard of before and whose names we never know, should or should not be removed from the care of their father and handed over to that of a philanthropic society. Only after this little matter had been disposed of did the author pick up the thread of the story and plunge once more into the adventures of the principal characters. "Dreadful!" said the critics.



## THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

THAT benign pirate, Mr. Thomas Mosher, of Portland Maine, performed a great service to literature when he published in a beautiful little book the original text, as it appeared in "The Germ," of "The Blessed Damozel," together with all the emendations made by Rossetti between the appearance of the poem in "The Germ," in 1850, and 1886, when it finally assumed its form as we now know it. Mrs. E. Grant Richards has recently published a little book called "Early Poems of Dante Gabriel Rossetti," in which the original "Germ" text is reproduced; but this strikes one as being not quite fair to the poet, who for nearly forty years went on changing and always improving this wonderful poem, which, if not admittedly Rossetti's masterpiece, has certainly serious claims to be so considered. Oscar Wilde in the course of a controversy carried on in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, in the early 'nineties, made use of the phrase, "no artist improves. The artist revolves in a cycle of masterpieces, the first of which is no less perfect than the last." On being congratulated by a friend on having written "a







splendid piece of nonsense" in that sentence, he retorted by inquiring whether the friend thought that Rossetti had ever written anything which he would definitely characterise as finer than "The Blessed Damozel." The friend replied that on the whole he thought not. "Very well," replied Oscar Wilde, "Rossetti wrote that poem when he was seventeen; isn't that a proof of the truth of what you call my 'splendid piece of nonsense'?" The friend, as behoved his position in what he now recognised as a short but trenchant Socratic dialogue, admitted that it did. He might, of course, have argued that the poem was not really completed when Rossetti was seventeen, and that the fact that he went on altering it during practically all the rest of his life was, on the contrary, a proof that the artist does improve. In which case it might have been replied that though the poem was subsequently altered and improved it was actually conceived and written when Rossetti was seventeen, and that the alterations, although admittedly improvements to the poem, did not imply that Rossetti improved, but merely that he had given longer time and more thought to it; and the latter is, I think, on the whole the truer aspect of the case. At any rate, there is enough of truth in it to show stupid people that it is rather unsafe to say, of a brilliant thing said by a brilliant man, that it is nonsense, simply because one does not happen to understand it. Brilliant people do not generally talk or write nonsense even when they engage in controversies in the daily papers.

Not all poets have possessed this faculty that Rossetti had of improving what they emended. Tennyson made several unfortunate changes in the later editions of his works. To take only one example. The lines in the "Palace of Art,"

Or else flushed Gannymede his golden thigh  
Half buried in the eagle's down,

he afterwards changed and spoilt by substituting "rosy" for golden; "his rosy thigh." Golden is infinitely finer, more beautiful and more classical in the right sense of the word. Compare Rossetti's changes in "The Blessed Damozel." In the first stanza he had originally:

Her blue grave eyes were deeper much  
Than a deep water even,

Six years later he improved it into:

Her eyes knew more of rest and shade  
Than waters stilled at even;

and finally, fourteen years after that, came the perfect:

Her eyes were deeper than the depths  
Of waters stilled at even.

Here is an object-lesson in the way to write poetry, and a rebuke to the foolish and the ignorant who imagine the poet as a sort of inspired gramophone "pouring out" beautiful words as a nightingale pours out beautiful sounds. Real poets never "pour out" words, they coin them painfully and slowly and lovingly "with fire in the soul and ice in the brain," they leave the "pouring out" of words to journalists and stump orators and "distinguished statesmen"; rather they exercise an exquisite economy of words, those "shadows of created Beauty," those children of Thought and patient Selection.

Let us take again Stanza 8 as it originally appeared:

Heard hardly, some of her new friends  
Playing at holy games,  
Spoke gentle-mouthed among themselves  
Their virginal chaste names;  
And the souls, mounting up to God,  
Went by her like thin flames,

The first emendations are—in the first line:

She scarcely heard her new sweet friends,

and then in the third line:

Softly they spake among themselves,

which really are not much better, if at all, than the original lines. In 1870, twenty years after the lines were written, Rossetti was still hunting and groping for the right words. He changes

into  
Playing at holy games,  
Amid their loving games;

which does not seem a great improvement, but the third line he changes into:

Spoke evermore among themselves,

which gave him the clue to the last perfect version sixteen years later:

Around her lovers newly met  
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,  
Spoke evermore among themselves  
Their heart-remembered names  
And the souls, mounting up to God,  
Went by her like thin flames.

How splendid, how perfect! And yet remember this in support of the "cycle of masterpieces" theory that the two last lines, which I have italicised, have not been altered at all. They were there from the beginning, and they are the lines of the stanza, perhaps of the whole poem, both from the splendour of the image they evoke and the cunning skill of using the epithet "thin" for flames. Almost any one else would have said "red flames" or "curled flames," or something else which would have spoilt the perfect beauty of the stanza.

Thin flames!—but I must stop, although I have only dealt with two of the stanzas of the poem. (Every stanza, with the exception of three, was altered by Rossetti, and in every single case the alterations were improvements.) I am reminded how dangerously narrow is the border line between the language of true admiration and emotion, and the language of gush. I don't want to gush if I can help it; but I would rather do that than not say what I think, or be patronising of great men which seem to be the Scylla and Charybdis of most of our hebdomadal critics, when they are not taking the other and still more usual alternative of being merely dull and dismal. This alternative is perhaps suggested to them by the lines in the "Duchess of Malfi":

Come let us sing a heavy note,  
Some deadly dogged howl!

At any rate, that appears to be the sort of spirit in which most of the gentlemen who discourse in weekly magazines devoted to literature sit down to write. They appear to forget that the lines in Webster's play are put into the mouth of a madman, and are not intended as "advice to those about to write an article." Or is it the editors who forget, or perhaps (*horresco referens*) the proprietors; and is it they who are responsible for the perverted alchemy which transmutes brilliant talents (and London is to-day full of brilliant talents) into dull metal? I don't know. But I do know that there is a theory (emanating from Fleet Street) that it "doesn't pay" to be brilliant, and that "the public doesn't like it." I think the theory is a mistaken one. Need I say that these remarks do not refer to the journal in which I have the honour to write? I hope not. I can detect notes as well as any man living, but as to beams, I have never been able to see any except, occasionally, moonbeams. I am a poet.

A. D.

Daily Mail. May 11. (London)

OSCAR WILDE IN FRENCH.

It is devoutly to be hoped that the French valuation of the talent of Oscar

right. 125, where the text women grow old nowad the faithfulness of their a through anything else."



# Glasgow Evening News,

## LITERATURE, ART, MUSIC.

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Messrs Vickers send out the very interesting, it correct, information that the late Oscar Wilde is supposed to be the author of a book entitled "A Holiday in Hades," which they propose to issue under the pseudonym of "David Scoffern." We are accustomed to the continual returns to activity of the shade of the late Adeline Sergeant, but it is another matter when authors of the rank of Oscar Wilde renew their labours.



Daily Mail. May 4. (London)

### OSCAR WILDE IN FRENCH.

It is devoutly to be hoped that the French valuation of the talent of Oscar Wilde will not base itself upon the translation into French by a well-meaning M. Arnelle of "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," and "An Ideal Husband." The wit and sparkle of the dialogue are the very life of these comedies, and this astonishing translation has managed to kill both. In many cases, when a characteristic paradox appears in the original, M. Arnelle appears to have come to the chari

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inversion of the obvious was due to a slip of the pen, which it is his duty to set

right. Thus, where the text says: "More women grow old nowadays through the faithfulness of their admirers than through anything else," the sentence is translated correctly, but for the small detail that "faithfulness" becomes "infidélité." Again, "We do our best to waste the public time" is translated by "Nous faisons de notre mieux pour ne pas perdre le temps destiné au public." This sort of thing is so amazing that one ceases to be thrilled by mere mistranslations such as "étandard de morale" for "standard of life," or "il faut le connaître entièrement" for "it should be more widely known."



**W**HAT "Peerage" shall I buy? That is a question which many people ask themselves at this time of the year; nor is the question a snobbish one, or a foolish one, for nowadays it is almost necessary to have a "Peerage" at one's elbow so as to understand the news of the passing hour.

At a moment when the House of Lords is being once more threatened this may seem extraordinary. As a matter of fact, however, there has probably never been a time when the peerage was so integral a part of the community as at the present. It is an extraordinary comment on democracy that this should be the case, but it remains a fact. I once heard Mr. John Burns in a speech at Hyde Park ridiculing a worker for balancing himself on the railing in Rotten Row to watch the "swells" go past. But in spite of all that, the theoretical democrat may say—and his attitude is delightfully burlesqued in "The Man from Blankleys"—there is not only a great interest in a lord among the masses, but it is an absolute fact that a lord (though only flesh and blood like other people) automatically assumes a certain value in the mind of a country such as ours.

The growth of the peerage is coincident with the growing popularity of the Crown which seems to have deliberately chosen this and kindred

## WHO'S WHO IN THE PEERAGE. }

By J. M.  
BULLOCH.

methods to plant the feet of the throne on a wider basis. Not only has the number of peers been increased, but practically a new class has been created in making the children of life peers "Honourable"—an order which was retrospective and which has given immense umbrage to the baronets. Many new orders and decorations have been created by the Crown as the fountain of honour, and the holders of these go to increase the Court or privileged class. Here is a list of a few of these recent orders.

- 1856. The Victoria Cross.
- 1861. The Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, which takes precedence after the Bath.
- 1862. The Royal Order of Victoria and Albert (for Women).
- 1878. The Imperial Order of the Crown of India (for Women).
- 1878. The Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire.
- 1886. The Distinguished Service Order.
- 1896. The Royal Victorian Order.
- 1899. The Order of Mercy.

1901. The Conspicuous Service Cross (for the Navy).

1902. The Order of Merit.

1902. The Imperial Service Order.

The paradoxical note of our time is illustrated very strikingly this year. Although last year marked the return of the most powerful democratic Parliament in the history of our country, it also marked an almost record number of creations, including seventeen peers, nineteen baronets, 190 knights, and 338 companions.

Five annuals, specially devoted to the peerage, are now making their appearance, although 100 years ago there was but one or two, notably Debrett; moreover, the same ground is covered more or less by nearly all the different annuals, such as Whitaker, Hazell, and so on. Most of the peerages are expensive, but the popular demand for such a work has increased so much that within the last few years a 3s. 6d. peerage has been issued by our old friend Whitaker, and it is not only the cheapest but it is one of the very best.

These peerages while in some senses rivals are

also complementary. Thus Burke, now in its sixty-ninth edition, and published at two guineas, is undoubtedly the best for giving the genealogy of the peers, and it has improved immensely of recent years, with the increasing accuracy of genealogy which no longer answers Mr. Oscar Wilde's description of it as "the best thing the English have done in fiction." The oldest peerage, Debrett, which is now in its 194th year, and which also costs two guineas, specialises on the living collaterals of the particular families, and devotes but small space to genealogy. It is done with extraordinary care so that it may be taken to justify the title sometimes bestowed upon it as the "Bible of Society." Then comes Lodge's Peerage, now in its seventy-fifth edition. This work has had a very curious history, for Lodge, who was Norroy King of Arms, had practically nothing whatever to do with its compilation. The book was really compiled by three ladies—Anne, Eliza, and Maria Innes—and Lodge, from "motives of benevolence," simply lent his name to it.

A year or two ago the peerage was taken

over by the Kellys, of Directory fame, and they very wisely jettisoned the ladies' work and incorporated (without stating the fact), the remarkable peerage which had been compiled by the late Mr. Joseph Foster. Why Mr. Foster's peerage was not a success is difficult to say, for it was very well done, if on somewhat purist lines, and it was the pioneer in the new school of decorative heraldry. The new Lodge remains by far the best peerage in this respect. We come to a capital 10s. 6d. book in Dod's peerage, which has just been issued for the sixty-seventh year. Dod, like Burke, was an Irishman, and compiled a well-known Parliamentary Guide in addition to the peerage. The specialty of Dod is in biographies of the peers rather than in genealogical histories or lists of relations. Whitaker, which is only a few years old, contains everything that most of us want in its 737 pages.

Notwithstanding the large number of annuals published about the peers and the great amount of gossip that appears in newspapers about them, their biographies in book form are extremely inadequate. Nearly all the peerages proper content themselves with simply giving official information, and even "Who's Who," which more or less covers the same ground, has much to mend in this respect. I have often thought that a man who can compile a peerage which would treat of peers as human beings rather than figure-heads in an inherited succession would make a hit.



1907.

April 16.

# Daily Telegraph

Our Paris Correspondent writes: After lengthy negotiations, arrangements have been made to perform Richard Strauss's "Salome" in Paris, where Oscar Wilde's play, which he wrote himself in very flamboyant French, was first acted, about a dozen years ago by "L'Œuvre" Dramatic Society, then in its heyday. The opera will be given on or about May 10, at the Châtelet Theatre, under the patronage of the Société des Grandes Auditions de France, presided over by the Countess Greffulhe, and under the management of Mr. Gabriel Astruc, who holds the French rights of the work. The first rehearsals will be conducted by Gabriel Pierné, an intimate friend of Strauss, who is expected, towards May 2, to superintend the final preparations. "Salome" will be sung in German by the artists who "created" the opera in different German towns, the cast being varied for successive performances. The orchestra will be that of Mr. Colonne. "Salome" is eagerly expected in Paris, where the critics have praised it highly, Mr. Pierre Lalo, of the *Temps*, who is no logroller, being enthusiastic over the music, while "slating" Oscar Wilde's play fiercely.



April 17.

Glasgow Evening Citizen

## THEATRICAL GOSSIP.

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The Paris correspondent of the "Telegraph" writes:—After lengthy negotiations, arrangements have been made to perform Richard Strauss's "Salome" in Paris, where Oscar Wilde's play, which he wrote himself in very flamboyant French, was first acted, but 12 years ago, by "L'Œuvre" Dramatic Society, then in its heyday. The opera will be given at the Chatelet Theatre, under the patronage of the Societe des Grandes Auditions de France. The first rehearsals will be conducted by Gabriel Pierne, an intimate friend of Strauss. "Salome" will be given in German by the artistes who "created" the opera in different German towns, the libretto being varied for successive performances. The orchestra will be that of Mr Colonne. "Salome" is eagerly expected in Paris, where the critics have anticipated it highly. Mr Pierre Lalo, of the "Temps," who is no log-roller, being enthusiastic over the music, while "slating" Oscar Wilde's play fiercely.



May 7.

## Nottingham Guardian,

We are informed that the authorship of a forthcoming work entitled "A Holiday in Hades" dealing with the mighty dead is assigned to ~~David Scoffern~~ though "David Scoffern" will officially appear as the author.

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## IMPATIENCE

In fact my form's the bloomin' utter.—W. E. HENLEY.

MR. BEERBOHM TREE some time ago started a dramatic school for the training of young actors—an experiment which more than justified the sanguine hopes of our most enterprising managers. Could he be induced to start a school for dramatic critics? That there is a crying need for some such institution, the dramatic notices in the daily press afford a melancholy proof. My complaint against a particular class of journalist is not that his point of view is stupid or old-fashioned. It is only fair that stupidity should have its recognised mouthpiece on the staff of every paper, especially on a question of such commercial importance as the drama. The majority of plays are written down to the intelligence of the dramatic critics! A play, even when it is a failure, is seen and discussed by persons who never think of reading the other lies in a newspaper. Old-fashioned people, numerically less than the stupid, are also of considerable importance. Age does not wither for them, the Robertsonian drama, nor does custom stale the infinite Variety stage. Age has nothing to do with prejudices and predilections. The old-fashioned are intellectually important because they remind us of what our fathers had to fight against and what our children may become. They emphasise for us that there is no finality in art and that old-fashioned people will exist forty years hence, clinging with the tenacity of youth to ideas which have ceased to be intelligent or to have significance, because the environment has changed. The paradox of the first generation becomes the truth of the second, the commonplace of the third and the platitude of the fourth.

The man who first said "'Boh' to a goose," was probably a great innovator and in his day a hero who received the freedom of his city and the thanks of the community in the shape of a flint arrow-head—the Victorian Order of the period, awarded for acts of conspicuous bravery. Mothers told their children of his daring and sages lamented the lack of spirit and enterprise of good old days when speech was freer and courage held of more account. Then some horrid little boy, bored with tradition, chose a favourable opportunity, when every one could both see and hear him, for repeating the words to a flock of geese, which paid not the slightest attention. His family con-