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Oscar Wilde  
Scrapbook

Vol. 9

# Free Lance, June 1, 1907 Drama of To-Day.

M. C. S.

## A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE.

Surely no one with a sense of humour ever took Oscar Wilde seriously? Isn't it rather late in the day to attempt to dissect the extraordinary quips and cranks of this clever creature, whose daring audacity, superb effrontery, and splendid impudence were after all the principal stepping-stones that served to land him on the topmost rung of the ladder of fame.

"Whatever I say, or how I say it, matters little, the public will accept everything from me; they'll laugh, or they'll weep, but they will never take the trouble to reason why or wherefore, because it is I—I, who rule and dominate!" said Oscar Wilde, and he was right.

Not for a single moment, then, was there any question as to the brilliant reception given to "A Woman of No Importance" when it was originally played by Mr. Beerbohm Tree at the Haymarket Theatre some fourteen years ago, and when the transparent cynicisms and affected vapourings of Oscar Wilde were the fashion, and people crowded in thousands at his bidding, some to be amused, others to be amazed, a few—a very few—to be shocked!

Society then was not wearied at seeing itself satirised and held up to ridicule. It was a novelty to probe beneath the attractive drapery of Wilde's sparkling wit and sarcastic genius and discover one's best friends. The smart lines, the brilliant "battle of words," the entire dialogue crackling with caustic fire, and veneered with truth, was then rattled off at a break-neck, pit-pat pace that gave you no time to pause or think, and it was all so exquisitely and deftly "sent" over the footlights that your senses were enslaved and your commonsense absolutely dumb!

This was the great art of Oscar Wilde.

He'd knock you clean off your balance, bowl you over, take all the wind out of you for the time being, and when the froth had bubbled out, but little remained save perhaps a vague regret that twisted itself into the inevitable "if only" or "what might have been."

At the revival of this much discussed play at His Majesty's there was, I regret to say, but one artist among the many who acted with conviction and gave the author's words their full meaning. That one was Miss Ellis Jeffreys, who appeared as Mrs. Allenby, and every playlover should feel grateful to Mr. Tree for having induced this charming comedy actress to come home again. She must not be allowed to wander back to America any more, she is really wanted here, and cannot be spared.

Miss Marion Terry must ever strike the note of tenderness and pathos in all she does, but she unfortunately lacks the underlying tragic force that belongs to such a character as Mrs. Arbuthnot.

That terrible "wiping out" from her life of the man who has ruined her, which Mrs. Bernard Beere conveyed so wonderfully, is never for an instant realised by Miss Terry.

Mrs. Beere had fought alone and with desperate energy, she had come forth from the furnace of pain and sorrow triumphantly, and in the end her reward came . . . she checkmated Lord Illingworth . . . she kicked him like she would have done some horrid reptile out of her path, and swept away with the dignity of a queen—she was, in fact the splendid conqueror.

Miss Marion Terry is the broken-hearted, subjugated, vanquished woman, and the whole meaning of the last act is shrouded in her "veil of tears."

With Mrs. Charles Calvert, again, one cannot help drawing a comparison between her Lady Hunstanton and that of poor Rose Leclercq, who was every inch the grand dame, and who made you feel she was the woman to the manner born and bred.

But perhaps the nervous hesitation displayed by Mr. Tree as Lord Illingworth—a character he revelled in years ago, and whose magnificent presence and devil-may-care

fascination made Mrs. Beere's task all the more difficult—was responsible for a good deal of the general "fluffiness" of so many of the artists, and those in the audience who had never seen the play before must have received an entirely different impression to that which was conveyed when it was first produced at the Haymarket—an impression that I fear is no improvement on the original.

Miss Viola Tree, from sheer sincerity, is very interesting as Hester Worsley, and Mr. Charles Quartermaine plays admirably as Gerald Arbuthnot, the son of "The Woman of No Importance."

But, alas! that painful halting in the lines and frequent "feeling for words" so marred the general performance last Wednesday that it was impossible to shake off the tension of wonder as to who would "dry up" next or give yourself up to the full enjoyment of the play.

Perhaps, however, all that is changed now, and the polished dialogue is again spoken with the distinction and faultless grace that hitherto characterised it.

Ignorance of the author's text on the part of the performers must hamper the best play ever written, and if "A Woman of No Importance" is not quite perfect as a drama, there is, at any rate, a considerable amount of entertaining and amusing comedy in it, and every audience likes to be amused!

New Age. May 30. 1907

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Since our native conventions do not permit us to hear Strauss' opera founded upon Oscar Wilde's "Salome," and as the majority of us find trips for the purpose to the Continent or America somewhat inconvenient, we shall have to stay our hunger with literature. Mr. John Lane is befriending us here by issuing a volume entitled "Strauss' 'Salome': A Guide to the

Opera," by Lawrence Gilman. The price of the book is three shillings. 2019-03-18 Women's University Library 271 Illustrated with  
H. J.

# Globe.

June 27, 1907

Mr. Tree tells us that his present season will terminate on Friday, July 5, the final performance of "A Woman of No Importance" taking place the previous evening. For the closing night a special bill will be given, consisting of scenes from the season's productions, including the first act of "Colonel Newcome," a scene from "A Winter's Tale," the first act of "A Woman of No Importance," the last act of "Antony and Cleopatra," and "The Van Dyck."

# Sporting & Dramatic News,

ROUND THE THEATRES.

By "VEDETTE."

MR. BEERBOHM TREE is a clever actor, a clever manager, and a clever man all round. But he is, I fear, just now in danger of proving too clever by half in undertaking too many things to do himself full justice in any of them. Those who remember, as I do, his original embodiment of Lord Illingworth at the Haymarket fourteen years ago know how admirably he can convey in style and bearing and method the man's impudent wit and well-bred insolence, his superficial distinction and his innate unworthiness of nature. He is one of the few actors on our stage who can pose as effectively in the fashionable tailor-made garments of to-day as in the picturesque fancy costumes of days gone by. Thus, on the first night of the revival of *A Woman of No Importance* he still looked his part to the life and still impersonated it convincingly, until after the end of the first act his own conviction in it seemed suddenly to die away. I do not know whether Mr. Tree was actually in trouble over his words, but, at any rate, he appeared to be hesitating over all that he did and said; and, unluckily, this uncertainty of touch was shared by Miss Marion Terry, who ought to have been an ideal Mrs. Arbuthnot, but who missed her grip of the character in one of its most important phases. If Wilde's last act means anything at all, it must surely mean a long-delayed triumph for the deeply-injured woman, as well as a tardy punishment for the man whose latent caddishness ultimately shows through his veneer of gentility. But Miss Terry's Mrs. Arbuthnot, so gracious and winning in her appeal of pathos, never took the situation into her own hand when the tables were turned, and when it was for her to grant or to refuse the appeals of others. Her whole performance, like Mr. Tree's, has the air of a tentative rehearsal; and the consequence was that such dramatic interest as Wilde's conventional plot can boast was almost entirely missed.

I am told, and I can well believe it, that all this is changed already, that the play is acted as capably in its big scenes as in its lesser ones, and that it goes splendidly throughout. This is only as it ought to be, for Oscar Wilde's brilliant work well deserved resuscitation, and it has at His Majesty's a cast which, in theory, is well-nigh perfect. Mr. Tree and Miss Marion Terry when at their own best could hardly be improved upon for the interpretation of the characters here allotted to them, while hardly one of the remaining *dramatis personæ* is in incompetent or even doubtful hands. The Lady Hunstanton of Mrs. Charles Calvert is, of course, not so much of the *grande dame* as was Miss Rose Leclercq's, but then, *en revanche*, she is infinitely more comic in her delivery of the plaintive commonplaces which accentuate the reckless wit of the sallies whereby they are provoked. As to the Mrs. Allenby of Miss Ellis Jeffreys, she is simply the perfection of smartness, whether in her toilets or in her talk. Her conversational fireworks are flashed out in an effortless way that would, I am sure, have delighted the fastidious ear of their inventor. She strikes even more accurately than did Mrs. Tree before her the true note of fashionable frivolity, and in her flippant discussion of serious matters she wafts the true tone of the drawing-room across the foot-lights. She has some of Wilde's happiest lines to speak, and she manages to speak them as one to the epigrammatic manner born. The rôle of Lady Stutfield enables Miss Kate Cutler to show still further development in the refined methods of non-musical comedy. Miss Kate Bishop, as Lady Caroline Pontefract, makes an old lady not less pleasant than her young ones of years gone by, and Mr. Maurice is almost farcically droll as the blandly optimistic Archdeacon. Miss Viola Tree's Hester Worsley, though sentimentally sincere in her Puritanic protests, is not much like any American girl whom I ever came across: she wants accent and she wants "snap." But I rather like Mr. Quartermaine's boyish Gerald, and I am glad to see Mr. Allan's ponderous M.P. once more.

The foreign play is not so much *en evidence* just now on our stage as it has sometimes been at this season of the year, unless, indeed, I am to count as foreign those importations from America to which some half-dozen of our West-end theatres have lately been devoted. But if France and Germany are holding back for awhile, I notice that Ireland is well to the fore, as we are promised an Irish season shortly at the Great Queen Street Theatre, where, however, the plays presented will be in English and not—as might have been expected from their patriotic origin—in the native tongue of the distressful country. One of the works given will be that *Playboy of the Western World* of Mr. J. M. Synge, which caused so much talk in Dublin a few months ago. Others in prose and verse will be from the ardent pens of Mr. Yeats and Lady Gregory. It is to be hoped that these productions will be received with interest and favourably criticised, or the cry of "another injustice to Ireland!" is, I fear, sure to be raised.

## *A Brilliant Revival.*

The revival of that very brilliant and very bewildering play, "A Woman of no Importance," at His Majesty's was the event of last week. It was a curious experience to sit and listen to the polished dialogue and sparkling epigram which had dazzled one a good many years ago, when one was more likely to be dazzled by the meteoric brilliancy of cleverness into forgetting to ask whether it was anything more than a tinkling cymbal. Possibly, analysed in cold blood, the daring paradoxes are a little empty and the epigrams are beneath the surface often hollow. Still, many gems of wit remain as brilliant as ever. The amazing cleverness of the dialogue becomes manifest when one studies the construction of the play, or, rather, the want of it. For the whole of the first act and most of the second there is practically no action at all. Half a dozen men and women sit about and provide one another with pegs to hang epigrams on, or openings for deft and witty scores. The story hardly begins to develop until the closing scene of the second act. Yet not a minute of the time is waste, because it is spent under a running fire of wit and raillery. As soon as the story develops it grips. The duel between Lord Illingworth and Mrs. Arbuthnot

for the soul of their son is drama that goes below the surface. Every successive scene in the last two acts is tense with conflict.

The cast almost throughout reaches a high level. As Lord Illingworth, Mr. Tree was, perhaps, inclined to be jerky and over full of mannerism; but in the last act he rose to the height of a great occasion. He was never greater than in defeat. The quiet, deadly insult in his manner towards the woman he offered to make his wife, and the restraint with which he hid rather than showed the hurt his son's letter had inflicted on him was a notably fine bit of work. Miss Marion Terry made Mrs. Arbuthnot a real woman, whose suffering and anger were equally real, and few other actresses could have made the fine scene with her son more poignant, while the straightforwardness and sincerity wherewith Mr. Charles Quartermaine made a none too easy part acceptable deserves more than a passing word of commendation. The brilliant artificiality of Mrs. Allenby suited Miss Ellis Jeffreys' polished style like a glove, and Mrs. Calvert was inimitable in the part of old Lady Hunstanton, who persists, in her canary-brained way, in regarding everything for the best in the comparatively best of all possible worlds. The revival at His Majesty's is a red-lettered event in our dramatic calendar.

Sheffield Independent, May 31.

There would appear to be a revival of several of Oscar Wilde's comedies. It would be regrettable if the stage lost plays so brilliant, so effective, and so delightful as this famous dramatist gave to the theatre in his happy days, and it is pleasing to note that no fewer than three, "A Woman of no Importance," "An Ideal Husband," and "The Importance of being Earnest," are at present being played in the country. Mr. Beerbohm Tree's production of "A Woman of no Importance" at His Majesty's Theatre, in London, is now attracting crowded audiences. "An Ideal Husband" is to be presented at the Sheffield Lyceum Theatre next week. It is late in the day to eulogise the comedy, and its interest ought to attract very large houses. The company which this week has been playing "The Three Musketeers" at the Lyceum will be responsible for the performances, and Miss Vera Beranger will take the role of Mrs. Cheveley. Mr. Ernest B. Norris is to play as Sir Robert Chiltern, and the cast generally is good.

### The Tit-Bits Comedy.

Mr. Tree, of His Majesty's Theatre, has revived Oscar Wilde's "A Woman of No Importance," which he originally produced at the Haymarket fourteen years ago; and notwithstanding the comedy's redundant epigram and long-deferred plot, I found it vastly entertaining.

It is true that in thinking it over afterwards, one's memories are rather confused and bewildering. Thus, my recollection of the first two acts consists of a fortuitous concatenation of disjointed conversational rip-raps, running something like this:

SHE: Married men nowadays act like bachelors, and bachelors like married men.

HE: Ah, yes. The book of life began in a garden—and ended in Revelations.

SHE: I look upon my husband as a promissory note which I am tired of meeting.

HE: Woman resembles the Sphinx without a riddle.

SHE: My husband talks, but has no conversation.

HE: The question of the East End of London is a question of slavery. The only thing is to amuse the slaves.

SHE: Why don't they give them magic lanterns, and missionaries, and other popular things?

HE: Extravagance is the luxury of the poor.

SHE: What is life?

HE: Life is a *mauvais quart d'heure* made up of exquisite moments.

SHE: A man can survive anything but death.

HE: The House of Lords is never in touch with public opinion; that is what keeps it civilised.

SHE: Twenty years of romance makes a woman a ruin; after twenty years of married life she resembles a public building.

HE: I always kiss women who talk seriously; it's such a tremendous surprise to them.

*Et cetera—ad infinitum.* But while it lasts, the crisp crepitation is pleasantly titillating to the ear. Bernard Shaw, of course, has done the same sort of thing since, but one cannot really enjoy Shaw without using one's brains, and that is where, to a society audience, the earlier playwright shows his superiority.

One need not understand Wilde's epigrams. In fact, one generally doesn't. One feels instinctively that his dialogue is brilliant, and that is ever so much easier than realising it.

Indeed, in France, Wilde's paradoxes have won to fame and popularity on their reputation, notwithstanding that their puzzled translator has innocently turned most of them into plain common-sense. Thus, where Wilde said: "More women grow old nowadays through the faithfulness of their admirers than through anything else," the painstaking translator renders "faithfulness" as "infidélité." And where Wilde said, "We do our best to waste the public time," the translator interprets: "Nous faisons de notre mieux pour ne pas perdre le temps destiné au public." And yet the audiences, feeling that the lines are meant to be subtly amusing, dutifully laugh.

But notwithstanding its slender plot and superfluous "talk," "A Woman of No Importance" is more entertaining than most entertainments. It contains two or three very strong situations, and being splendidly acted all round was very favourably received.

The central figure, Lord Illingworth, is played with exquisite nonchalance by Mr. Tree. Quite a second-hand Lord Chesterfield in his way is this peer, with his smart cynical talk, and abhorrence of all zeal, earnestness, and sincerity. The flippant cynicism of this end-of-the-century sybarite, amused the house vastly, and the more unmanly and inhuman he became in sentiment, the more the house seemed to appreciate him.

A Jissen Women's Library, assuredly. But was not Oscar Wilde, at his best, always unwholesome.

Tribune June 7. 1907

# ABOUT THE THEATRE.

BY WILLIAM ARCHER.

THE DRAMA IN PERSPECTIVE — II

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Barrie is more of a thinker than he; while as for the late Oscar Wilde and Mr. Bernard Shaw, one may fairly doubt whether at any previous period since the death of Dryden two such powerful intelligences have applied themselves to the writing of practical stage-plays. The streak of insanity in Wilde led to the pitiable ruin of his genius; but he had more brains in his head than all the playwrights of the eighteenth century put together.

Queen June 1. 1907.

### BEFORE THE FOOTLIGHTS.

#### HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

A PLAY which bears revival after fourteen years is scarcely one which needs much criticism on its reappearance. In that space of time, to be sure, theatrical taste changes, and a new order of playgoers come upon the scene; but if a manager who understands the needs of the moment deems a play which has not seen the light for a number of years to be worth replacing on the stage, it is to be assumed that it cannot meanwhile have grown what is called old-fashioned. In 1893, when Mr Tree first presented "A Woman of No Importance," it was thought to be a most brilliantly written play, and now that we again have an opportunity of seeing it under his management, there seems no reason to reverse his judgment. It is indeed a play brimming over with smart dialogue. Though we have now grown more accustomed than we were fourteen years ago to epigrams in modern comedies, and verbal brilliance does not surprise and delight us as much as it then did, it says much for the literary excellence and wit of "A Woman of No Importance" that none of its points seem in the least blunted, and that one laughs as heartily as ever at the cynically smart sayings of its clever author. The plot has suffered a little, it is true, in the process of keeping. The type of people so amusingly drawn in this society comedy now seem to be a little out of place in their setting. If their story were told to-day, it would be told differently so far as the action of the play is concerned. On the dialogue it would be hardly possible to improve, but we should most assuredly get a more sincere story, because of late years we have learned much in the way of putting such histories as that of the unhappy Mrs Arbuthnot and the cynical Lord Illingworth on our stage. The revival suffered not a little on the first night from the fact that some members of the company at His Majesty's were hazy about their lines. In a play depending so much upon its dialogue it makes all the difference whether the artists are letter perfect, and certainly the scenes between Mrs Arbuthnot and Lord Illingworth suffered much from the uncertain way in which they were handled by Mr Tree and Miss Marion Terry, whose performance, however, is charmingly tender and pathetic. The cast is, on the whole, a good one, and gains in strength by the presence of Miss Ellis Jeffreys, whose Mrs Allenby is played in her usual bright and humorous fashion, and by the ever-welcome Mrs Charles Calvert as Lady Hunstanton. Miss Viola Tree does not make much of the American, but she looks exceedingly well and speaks her lines well.

Dartford Express June 1.

### THEATRICAL LONDON.

I think "A Woman of No Importance" has been received rather cruelly by the critics on the occasion of its revival at His Majesty's Theatre. Columns have been written which have the appearance of being inspired by nothing short of vindictiveness, and the reception of the piece on the night of my visit was immensely appreciative of all its wit and brilliancy. I think it is worth recalling to the mind of the public that in the days when Oscar Wilde was at the height of his career the production of a play from his pen was an event of importance in the dramatic world, and attracted an immense amount of attention. A reference to the newspaper files of that period will confirm this if we can judge from the amount of space devoted in the daily journals to the occasion. Who but Pinero, Jones and Barrie can stir the public interest to any extent now, and what plays now produced call for even moderate attention from the Press? Those who have not seen "A Woman of No Importance" will find it an extremely interesting and amusing play. I deny that it is old-fashioned or out of date. I see the more than usually captious critic takes exception to so much of the play being occupied by long stretches of dialogue and the lack of action. The same critic has praised Haymarket comedies of recent production where shallow dialogue has consumed practically a whole act. Let us be consistent.

Mr. Tree, I anticipate, will find a cordial response to his experiment. The younger generation of playgoers will be certain to seize the opportunity of sampling Wilde's genius, and certainly it finds full outlet in the play Mr. Tree has chosen. Our leading actor-manager finds the part of Lord Illingworth a very welcome medium for his talent, and it is a pleasant departure from the interesting, but rather highly coloured characters he has been affecting for some time past. The piece is mounted superbly, and acted throughout with exquisite refinement. Mr. Tree never errs for a moment, and his performance is of the highest artistic merit now to be seen in London. Miss Marion Terry as Mrs. Arbuthnot is extremely good, and, in fact, the whole company performs its allotted task with a distinction and brilliancy that are highly creditable. Miss Ellis Jeffreys and Mrs. Charles Calvert are names in the bill which also inspire confidence. The weekly matinees are on Wednesday.

Illustrated London News. June 1.

### THE PLAYHOUSES.

#### "A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE" AT HIS MAJESTY'S.

GOOD as it is to hear once more dialogue possessing such literary distinction as that of Mr. Oscar Wilde's fourteen-year-old play, "A Woman of No Importance," brilliant as it still the paradoxical wit of those epigrams which set all London society talking and striving to emulate them in the early 'nineties, there is no getting away from the fact that this drama with the "fils naturel" motif is scarcely more than artificial comedy which skirts but the surface of genuine emotion, and dates along with Sardou and the other fashioners of the well-made piece. It has its moments of pathos and dramatic intensity, as how should it not when its story is that of a woman who has been betrayed and done by her lover, and meets him at length

### Glasgow Herald.

The important sale at Sotheby's at the week end included, by the way, a copy of Allan Ramsay's "Poems," 1727-8, inscribed "To Dr. Robinson when at Edinburgh, July 30, 1734, with an autograph poem of eighteen lines on the fly-leaf of Volume I., beginning "Now troth, dear Doctor, it is kind." This was bought by Mr. W. Brown, of Edinburgh, for £10 5s. The very rare original American edition, "privately printed as manuscript," in 1853, of Oscar Wilde's "Duchess of Padua," perhaps the only surviving copy of the twenty printed for prompt purposes, fell at £41.

### Lady's Pictorial.

#### "A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE" AT HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

IT is fourteen years since the original production of Mr. Oscar Wilde's comedy, *A Woman of No Importance*, and it would be affectation to pretend that upon its revival on Wednesday last week at His Majesty's Theatre it did not show signs of wear and tear. That the author had a touch of genius no one who is intimately acquainted with his work can deny, without stultifying their own judgment or writing themselves down unappreciative of wit. But in the case of this particular play, shrewd and sharp as many of the epigrams are, there is something, they are led up to with an almost painful obviousness; indeed, strange as it may seem to use such an expression of such a writer, the machinery for producing these epigrams appears at times crude and clumsy. It is still impossible to smile when one hears the British sportsman, in his capacity of a follower of the hounds, being described as the "unspeakable chasing the uneatable" and it is still amusing to hear Lord Illingworth declare that the "Book of Life begins with a man and woman in a garden," and sharp-tongued Mrs. Allenby retort "and ends with Revelations." But, somehow or other, all these smart things seem to-day flashy rather than flashing.

PASTE RATHER THAN DIAMONDS, GILT RATHER THAN GOLD. It may be due simply to the fact that for fourteen years since the author set the vogue of saying smart things at any cost, of piling paradox upon paradox, of inverting and perverting familiar phrases until they assumed a hitherto undreamed-of meaning, we have got not merely used to the epigrammatic play, but a little weary of it.

The cult of cleverness is not so rampant as it was when *A Woman of No Importance* was written, and if it cannot quite be said that that method of play-writing that familiarity has bred contempt, it has at least bred something of impatience. Curiously enough, beneath the glittering, meretricious surface of this picture of corrupt social life there is not only a sound enough moral, but also a vein of melo-

drama, and even of domestic drama, and in the exploitation of this vein many really worthy and beautiful sentiments find expression. But when all is said, this story of the woman who is betrayed and, after twenty years, receives an offer of marriage from the man, Lord Illingworth, only to refuse it, is painful. It is the cause of some beautiful things being said, and of some fine actions being done, but the theme remains in itself unsavoury.

The acting in this revival leaves little to be desired, although upon the first night Mr. Tree, especially in the fourth act, betrayed unusual hesitancy, and even when he was saying the brightest epigrams which the author had put into his mouth, he did so with a deliberation which suggested, instead of the alert brain of a ready-witted man of the world, the deliberate manufacturing process of a professional *poseur*. Miss Ellis Jeffreys was quite delightful as the witty and unmoral, rather than immoral, Mrs. Allenby; and Miss Viola Tree charming and girlish as the young American girl, Hester Worsley, enunciating her little homilies without a suggestion of Puritanical priggishness. Miss Marion Terry as Mrs. Arbuthnot was womanly, tender, and, when occasion demanded it, indignant and passionate, in quite the right vein, never out of the picture, never obtrusive, always effective. Mr. Charles Quartermaine was an agreeable Gerald Arbuthnot; Mrs. Charles Calvert's dry, droll humour made Lady Hunstanton sufficiently amusing. Good work was also done by Miss Kate Bishop as Lady Caroline Ponecraft, and Miss Kate Cutler as Lady Stratfield, and the scenery, mounting, and dressing were quite charming.

Exington Daily Gazette May 31. 1907

It is not a pleasant subject to discuss in a column such as this. But, like the Bishop of Norwich, I feel that the time has come when some check should be put upon the moral (or rather the immoral) "teaching" of our risqué novelists. If we have a censor of plays, why not also a censor of novels? If Oscar Wilde's "Salomé" may not be produced on the British stage, why should it be circulated in book form? Surely we are, above all other nations, a nation of inconsistencies!

J. C. H.

Magnet (Leeds) June 1.

### REVIVAL AT HIS MAJESTY'S.

Whatever Mr Tree stages at His Majesty's it is sure to be most instructive and interesting, and his latest is not likely to prove an exception to the rule, for although some years have passed since Oscar Wilde's brilliant drama, "A Woman of No Importance," was staged at the Haymarket, it has lost none of its wit and wisdom, none of its delicate humor—humor which can only appeal to the educated senses. Mr Tree, as Lord Illingworth, presents a picture in fine colours of the man of the world, but never for a moment are the colours allowed to run rampant. In parts the actor is almost mercilessly cynical, but there are times when he rises to the heights of dramatic intensity and carries us away by the power of his impressive acting. Marion Terry is as human a Mrs Arbuthnot as could be pictured; there is a charm in her work which is there but which is undecipherable.

Planet June 1.

"A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE," which was revived by Mr. Tree at His Majesty's Theatre last week, is a play which depends on its dialogue and not on its plot. The plot is melodramatic and unconvincing; but the dialogue is marvellously brilliant, and quite as brilliant to-day as it was fourteen years ago, when the piece was produced. Nothing ages more quickly than a play, but I do not think that "A Woman of No Importance" shows its age to any great extent. The plot was old-fashioned before the play was written, but Oscar Wilde never troubled himself much about his plots. He was a master of English, and it is for its language that the play lives, and will live.

I HEAR there is a likelihood that "The Duchess of Padua," Wilde's tragedy about which I wrote last week, will be produced at a London theatre during the autumn season. The play was at one time in the hands of Mr. George Alexander, who was under contract to produce it. The contract, however, was afterwards annulled. The piece was produced in America, and made a great success there. If it were played in London now, there can be no doubt that it would excite the greatest interest.

Era, June 11. 1907

MR. MONCKTON HOFFE'S tour of Oscar Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest* has proved so satisfactory that he intends continuing it into the autumn. The company is playing a successful engagement this week at the Grand Theatre, Leeds.

### Saturday Review, June 1.

#### THE INAUDIBLE AND INARTICULATE SCHOOL.

WE can judge Oscar Wilde's plays better to-day than twelve or fourteen years ago, when the author suffered alternately from undue inflation and undue depression, to borrow the terms of the Stock Exchange. When the plays first appeared, Wilde dominated the dinner-table so completely that he had only to ask for the salt to set up a roar. Then came the period of execration, when all his paradoxes were merely inverted platitudes, and all his epigrams were stale or stolen. To-day we can calmly distinguish the merits of "A Woman of No Importance" from its faults, and with a short but sufficient perspective classify the play in literature. It is rather remarkable that after an interval of a little more than a century one Irishman should succeed another in the production of plays whose merit is purely literary. Oscar Wilde is the Sheridan of our day. The plays of the two men have a strong family resemblance; for their charm lies not in plot, or pathos, or character-drawing, but simply in style—in sheer brilliance of expression, in hard, enduring wit. Sheridan and Wilde were both men of the world, heartless, disrespected, but endowed with the magic power of leaving stings behind them in the mind of their audience. Nobody sympathises with old Sir Peter Teazle or Uncle Oliver; and nobody really cares whether Lord Illingworth marries Mrs. Arbuthnot, or feels the slightest emotion when Gerald threatens to kill his father. In "A Woman of No Importance," as

in "The School for Scandal," it is not the story or the characters that excite us, but the gay rhetoric and dazzling fence of the dialogue.

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A. A. B.

## BEFORE THE FOOTLIGHTS.

## HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

A PLAY which bears revival after fourteen years is scarcely one which needs much criticism on its reappearance. In that space of time, to be sure, theatrical taste changes, and a new order of playgoers come upon the scene; but if a manager who understands the needs of the moment deems a play which has not seen the light for a number of years to be worth replacing on the stage, it is to be assumed that it cannot meanwhile have grown what is called old fashioned. In 1893, when Mr Tree first presented "A Woman of No Importance," it was thought to be a most brilliantly written play, and now that we again have an opportunity of seeing it under his management, there seems no reason to reverse this judgment. It is indeed a play brimming over with smart dialogue. Though we have now grown more accustomed than we were fourteen years ago to epigrams in modern comedies, and verbal brilliance does not surprise and delight us as much as it then did, it says much for the literary excellence and wit of "A Woman of No Importance" that none of its points seem in the least blunted, and that one laughs as heartily as ever at the cynically smart sayings of its clever author. The plot has suffered a little, it is true, in the process of keeping. The type of people so amusingly drawn in this society comedy now seem to be a little out of place in their setting. If their story were told to-day, it would be told differently so far as the action of the play is concerned. On the dialogue it would be hardly possible to improve, but we should most assuredly get a more sincere story, because of late years we have learned much in the way of putting such histories as that of the unhappy Mrs Arbuthnot and the cynical Lord Illingworth on our stage. The revival suffered not a little on the first night from the fact that some members of the company at His Majesty's were hazy about their lines. In a play depending so much upon its dialogue it makes all the difference whether the artists are letter perfect, and certainly the scenes between Mrs Arbuthnot and Lord Illingworth suffered much from the uncertain way in which they were handled by Mr Tree and Miss Marion Terry, whose performance, however, is charmingly tender and pathetic. The cast is, on the whole, a good one, and gains in strength by the presence of Miss Ellis Jeffreys, whose Mrs Allenby is played in her usual bright and humorous fashion, and by the ever-welcome Mrs Charles Calvert as Lady Hunstanton. Miss Viola Tree does not make much of the American, but she looks exceedingly well and speaks her lines well.

June 4. 1907.

# Glasgow Herald.

The important sale at Sotheby's at the week end included, by the way, a copy of Allan Ramsay's "Poems," 1727-9, inscribed "To Dr. Robinsion when at Edinburgh, July 30, 1734, with an autograph poem of eighteen lines on the fly-leaf of Volume I., beginning "Now troth, dear Doctor, it is kind." This was bought by Mr W. Brown, of Edinburgh, for £10 5s. The very rare original American edition, "privately printed as manuscript," in 1883, of Oscar Wilde's "Duchess of Padua," perhaps the only surviving copy of the twenty printed for prompt purposes, fell at £41.

Jissen Word 2019-03-29 City Library

## THE PLAYHOUSES.

"A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE,"  
AT HIS MAJESTY'S.

GOOD as it is to hear once more dialogue possessing such literary distinction as that of Mr. Oscar Wilde's fourteen-year-old play, "A Woman of No Importance," brilliant as is still the paradoxical wit of those epigrams which set all London society talking and striving to emulate them in the early 'nineties, there is no getting away from the fact that this drama with the "fils naturel" motif is scarcely more than artificial comedy which skirts but the surface of genuine emotion, and dates along with Sardou and the other fashioners of the well-made piece. It has its moments of pathos and dramatic intensity, as how should it not when its story is that of a woman who has been betrayed and doned by her lover, and meets him at length

when their son has grown to manhood. It carries through neatly, if rather unconvincingly, a plot in which

father and son almost come to blows over an insult inflicted by the elder man on the girl of the boy's choice; and the mother at last obtains her chance of paying off old scores on the man who ruined her youth. And the play contains, among its incidental characters, one or two clever sketches or parodies of social types. But all the time the playgoer is conscious of a certain insincerity in the piece: the *dramatis personæ*, for the most part, talk in the same mannered style, and they are for ever posing and avoiding any natural expression of feeling. The play, in fact, is not only melodrama, but melodrama which makes a literary rather than an emotional appeal. A piece which depends so much as this upon its vivacious repartee calls for exceptionally brisk acting. In the present revival at his Majesty's there is a tendency among the performers to let the scenes drag. Moreover, Miss Marion Terry, who should have been an ideal representative of the titular character, Mrs. Arbuthnot, neither strikes a deep impress in the earlier acts nor displays enough contempt in the closing scene.

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*Sartford Express. June 11.*

## THEATRICAL LONDON.

I think "A Woman of No Importance" has been received rather cruelly by the critics on the occasion of its revival at His Majesty's Theatre. Columns have been written which have the appearance of being inspired by nothing short of vindictiveness, and the reception of the piece on the night of my visit was immensely appreciative of all its wit and brilliancy. I think it is worth recalling to the mind of the public that in the days when Oscar Wilde was at the height of his career the production of a play from his pen was an event of importance in the dramatic world, and attracted an immense amount of attention. A reference to the newspaper files of that period will confirm this if we can judge from the amount of space devoted in the daily journals to the occasion. Who but Pinero, Jones and Barrie can stir the public interest to any extent now, and what plays now produced call for even moderate attention from the Press? Those who have not seen "A Woman of No Importance" will find it an extremely interesting and amusing play. I deny that it is old fashioned or out of date. I see the more than usually captious critic takes exception to so much of the play being occupied by long stretches of dialogue and the lack of action. The same critic has praised Haymarket comedies of recent production where shallow dialogue has consumed practically a whole act. Let us be consistent.

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Mr. Tree, I anticipate, will find a cordial response to his experiment. The younger generation of playgoers will be certain to seize the opportunity of sampling Wilde's genius, and certainly it finds full outlet in the play Mr. Tree has chosen. Our leading actor-manager finds the part of Lord Illingworth a very welcome medium for his talent, and it is a pleasant departure from the interesting, but rather highly coloured characters he has been affecting for some time past. The piece is mounted superbly, and acted throughout with exquisite refinement. Mr. Tree never errs for a moment, and his performance is of the highest artistic merit now to be seen in London. Miss Marion Terry as Mrs. Arbuthnot is extremely good, and, in fact, the whole company performs its allotted task with a distinction and brilliance that are highly creditable. Miss Ellis Jeffreys and Mrs. Charles Calvert are names in the bill which also inspire confidence. The weekly matinees are on Wednesday.

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June 1. 1907

# Lady's Pictorial.

## "A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE," AT HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

IT is fourteen years since the original production of Mr. Oscar Wilde's comedy, *A Woman of no Importance*, and it would be affectation to pretend that upon its revival on Wednesday of last week at His Majesty's Theatre it did not show signs of wear and tear. That the author had a touch of genius no one who is intimately acquainted with his work can deny, without stultifying their own judgment or writing themselves down unappreciative of wit. But in the case of this particular play, shrewd and sharp as many of the epigrams are, there is something laboured about them all. They are not merely mechanical, they are led up to with an almost painful obviousness; indeed, strange as it may seem to use such an expression of such a writer, the machinery for producing these epigrams appears at times crude and clumsy.

It is still impossible not to smile when one hears the British sportsman, in his capacity of a follower of the hounds, being described as the "unspeakable chasing the uneatable" and it is still amusing to hear Lord Illingworth declare that the "Book of Life begins with a man and woman in a garden," and sharp-tongued Mrs. Allenby retort "and ends with Revelations." But, somehow or other, all these smart things seem to-day flashy rather than flashing,

### PASTE RATHER THAN DIAMONDS, GILT RATHER THAN GOLD.

It may be due simply to the fact that for fourteen years since the author set the vogue of saying smart things at any cost, of piling paradox upon paradox, of inverting and perverting familiar phrases until they assumed a hitherto undreamed-of meaning, we have got not merely used to the epigrammatic play, but a little weary of it.

The cult of cleverness is not so rampant as it was when *A Woman of no Importance* was written, and if it cannot quite be said of that method of play-writing that familiarity has bred contempt, it has at least bred something of impatience. Curiously enough, beneath the glittering, meretricious surface of this picture of corrupt social life there is not only a sound enough moral, but also a vein of melo-

drama, and even of domestic drama, and in the exploitation of this vein many really worthy and beautiful sentiments find expression. But when all is said, this story of the woman who is betrayed and, after twenty years, receives an offer of marriage from the man, Lord Illingworth, only to refuse it, is painful. It is the cause of some beautiful things being said, and of some fine actions being done, but the theme remains in itself unsavoury.

The acting in this revival leaves little to be desired, although upon the first night Mr. Tree, especially in the fourth act, betrayed unusual hesitancy, and even when he was saying the brightest epigrams which the author had put into his mouth, he did so with a deliberation which suggested, instead of the alert brain of a ready-witted man of the world, the deliberate manufacturing process of a professional *poseur*. Miss Ellis Jeffreys was quite delightful as the witty and unmoral, rather than immoral, Mrs. Allenby; and Miss Viola Tree charming and girlish as the young American girl, Hester Worsley, enunciating her little homilies without a suggestion of Puritanical priggishness. Miss Marion Terry as Mrs. Arbuthnot was womanly, tender, and, when occasion demanded it, indignant and passionate, in quite the right vein, never out of the picture, never obtrusive, always effective. Mr. Charles Quartermaine was an agreeable Gerald Arbuthnot; Mrs. Charles Calvert's dry, droll humour made Lady Hunstanton sufficiently amusing. Good work was also done by Miss Kate Bishop as Lady Caroline Ponetract, and Miss Kate Cutler as Lady Stutfield, and the scenery, mounting, and dressing were quite charming.

Islington Daily Gazette May 31. 1907

It is not a pleasant subject to discuss in a column such as this. But, like the Bishop of Norwich, I feel that the time has come when some check should be put upon the moral (or rather the immoral) "teaching" of our risque novelists. If we have a censor of plays, why not also a censor of novels? If Oscar Wilde's "Salomé" may not be produced on the British stage, why should it be circulated in book form? Surely we have a national library, a nation of inconsistencies!

J. C. H.

Leeds Mercury June 4.

## LEEDS THEATRES.

### "IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST."

#### OSCAR WILDE'S PLAY AT THE LEEDS GRAND.

A really capital performance was given last night at the Leeds Grand Theatre of Oscar Wilde's comedy "The Importance of Being Earnest."

One of the finest of that unfortunate author's plays, it runs well through its three acts. Some of the epigram smells of the lamp, some is the product of laborious pursuit, but it is sparkingly entertaining, adriot, and at times bitingly satiric.

Mr. Monckton Hoffe played Algernon Moncrieff with admirable point. His acting was in the best comedy vein, light and stimulating. Mr. Græme Campbell's study of John Worthing lacked a little finish, but it was distinctive and pleasant.

Miss Hester Newton made a capital blasé Gwendoline Fairfax with an exaggerated attachment to an ideal, and Miss Hope played John Worthing's ward with an ingenuousness that was not learned in contemplating either the lily or the sunflower. Miss Lloyd-Desmond's Miss Prism was a most amusing piece of characterisation, full of suggestion and deft touch. Miss Manners as Lady Bracknell, Mr. Ralph Hutton as Dr. Chasuble, and Mr. W. H. Barker as Lane, the man servant, completed an unusually competent company of artistes.

"Father Varien" was given as a curtain-raiser. The programme was dumb as to the author or the players who acted it. A good man and a good woman, an unfortunate man and a woman who gets a brute for a husband, and there you have a story which is by no means novel.

Magnet (Leeds) June 1.

## REVIVAL AT HIS MAJESTY'S.

Whatever Mr Tree stages at His Majesty's it is sure to be most instructive and interesting, and his latest is not likely to prove an exception to the rule, for although some years have passed since Oscar Wilde's brilliant drama, "A Woman of No Importance," was staged at the Haymarket, it has lost none of its wit and wisdom, none of its delicate humor—humor which can only appeal to the educated senses. Mr Tree, as Lord Illingworth, presents a picture in fine colours of the man of the world, but never for a moment are the colours allowed to run rampant. In parts the actor is almost mercilessly cynical, but there are times when he rises to the heights of dramatic intensity and carries us away by the power of his impressive acting. Marion Terry is as human a Mrs Arbuthnot as could be pictured; the work which is there but which is undescrivable.

“**A** WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE,” which was revived by Mr. Tree at His Majesty’s Theatre last week, is a play which depends on its dialogue and not on its plot. The plot is melodramatic and unconvincing; but the dialogue is marvellously brilliant, and quite as brilliant to-day as it was fourteen years ago, when the piece was produced. Nothing ages more quickly than a play, but I do not think that “A Woman of No Im-

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**I** HEAR there is a likelihood that “The Duchess of Padua,” Wilde’s tragedy about which I wrote last week, will be produced at a London theatre during the autumn season. The play was at one time in the hands of Mr. George Alexander, who was under contract to produce it. The contract, however, was afterwards annulled. The piece was produced in America, and made a great success there. If it were played in London now, there can be no doubt that it would excite the greatest interest.

Era,

June 11. 1907

MR. MONCKTON HOFFE'S tour of Oscar Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest* has proved so satisfactory that he intends continuing it into the autumn. The company is making a successful engagement this week at the Grand Theatre, Leeds.

Jissen Women's University Library

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## Saturday Review, June 1.

### THE INAUDIBLE AND INARTICULATE SCHOOL.

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A. A. B.

**Modern Society.**

On Wednesday night Mr. Beerbohm Tree revived Oscar Wilde's fine play, "A Woman of No Importance," at His Majesty's Theatre, and, judging by the warm reception it secured, he has not gone amiss in his selection. With its clever characterisation, crisp dialogue, and enthralling theme, there is nothing to specially date the work, and the allusions to topical subjects fit in now just as appropriately as they did on its first production. The Smart Set here represented, and contrasted with the so-called Puritanical element, are quite up to date in their ways and doings, and may be met with any time; while there are, of course, many counterparts of Lord Illingworth knocking about the world.

The piece is splendidly cast. Mr. Tree himself takes up his old part of the selfish Lord Illingworth, which he carries through with consummate ease. Miss Marion Terry, who never fails in the sympathetic expression she gives to all her work, was altogether beyond praise as the much-tried Mrs. Arbuthnot. Mr. Charles Quartermaine made a wholly excellent Gerald, and Miss Viola Tree was well suited in the part of the wholesome-minded American girl, Hester Worsley. Mrs. Charles Calvert was a delightful Lady Hunstanton, with her happy-go-lucky ways of recounting past events; while Miss Ellis Jeffreys filled the part of the very much up-to-date smart married woman admirably; and excellent little sketches were forthcoming from Mr. Charles Allan, Mr. Edmund Maurice, Miss Kate Cutler, and Miss Kate Bishop.

The dresses are charming, and are cleverly suited to the widely differing styles of their three pretty wearers. Miss Ellis Jeffreys, as the ultra-smart Mrs. Allenby, makes a fascinating picture in the charming garden scene of the first act in a gown where simple white linen is united to costly and fashionable flit lace. The lace is mainly responsible for the making of the kimona bodice, and is there bordered with bands of the linen, while it opens in front over a chemisette of softly scalloped Valenciennes, the transparent collar-band and the frilled elbow-sleeves being also of the finer lace; while the skirt is arranged in alternate panels of linen and lace, with double insertion bands of lace to further adorn the linen.

Miss Viola Tree in her turn wears a gown of white chiffon voile, whose gracefully-hanging folds merge at the hem into a deeply bordering band of turquoise tint, headed by a trail of closely-clustered roses embroidered in pale pink and yellow silks. The pleated draperies of the bodice are finished off with blue and white tassels, and again introduce the contrast of the bordering blue and brodered roses; while a soft fulness of lace comes in front and forms the frilled undersleeves.

Dainty Miss Kate Cutler also looks delightful in a crepe-de-chine gown in the pinkish mauve of opening lilac buds, the crepe being used in appliqué form together with velvet on the silk net of exactly the same tone, which figures on both skirt and bodice; while some filmy ivory-toned lace comes near the neck. Her Leghorn hat is trimmed with a wreath of softly-shaded pink roses caught together by a bow of pink silk ribbon whose ends—as long and wide as a sash—fall far down the skirt at the back. And then, too, there are other roses fastened on the handle of her pretty sunshade.

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**Liverpool Daily Courier,**

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**Evening News, June 5.**

**EPIGRAMS IN NEW NOVELS.**

**THE "BOOM" IN WIT AND WISDOM.**

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ON THE WALL. By Richard Free. John Lane. 6s. Knowledge of a trade may keep a man from starvation, but think what a comfort a piano would be when the gnawing begins. What a cemetery a brain can be of forgotten debts and unrequited epites. Some prefer to spend their time on forgetting and everything but duty, for duty chafes like a hair shirt.

*Yorkshire Evening Post, June 4.*

**THE LEEDS THEATRES THIS WEEK.**

**A REVIVAL OF INTEREST AT THE GRAND.**

**"THE MANXMAN" AT THE ROYAL.**

After the lapse of years it is pleasant indeed to renew a stage acquaintance with the works of the late Oscar Wilde, those epigrammatic masterpieces which have been so long under the cloud of their creator's downfall.

This resurrection of two of Wilde's plays, "A Woman of No Importance" in London, and "The Importance of Being Earnest," in the provinces, will, no doubt, be followed by a revival of other of his works, all of which display the genius of the man.

It is a good many years ago that "The Importance of Being Earnest" was seen in Leeds; to many of those at the Grand Theatre last night it was altogether new. It is the lightest and the brightest of Wilde's comedies, and his mastery as a maker of delightful epigrams is nowhere seen to better effect.

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The company playing the piece is Messrs. Hoffe and Campbell, and, altogether, it is one excellently selected. Mr. J. Graeme Campbell has made a careful study of the part of John Worthing, J.P. From Mr. Monckton Hoffe, as Algernon Moncrieff, fall the majority of the pleasant cynicisms. Lady Bracknell, the society dams, the Hon. Gwendoline Fairfax, and Cicely Cardew, are all well portrayed. Miss Amy Lloyd-Desmond, in the character of the highly-respectable Miss Prism, is extremely clever.

A curtain raiser, "Father Varien," precedes the play.

*Yorkshire Telegraph, June 4.*  
**AMUSEMENTS IN SHEFFIELD.**

**"AN IDEAL HUSBAND" AT THE LYCEUM.**

Sheffield playgoers have this week an opportunity of showing an interest in the revival of one of the late Oscar Wilde's comedies. "An Ideal Husband," at the Lyceum Theatre last night, attracted a large house, and the piece was admirably presented by the company which last week did so well in "The Three Musketeers." Mr. Ernest E. Norris is the leader of the company, and is a strong and dignified figure as Chiltern. To Mr. Austin Melroy, as Lord Goring, falls much of the epigram as well as much of the serious work of the play, and he acquits himself well in both respects. Miss Vera Beringer, as Mrs. Cheveley, the adventuress who would bring Chiltern to dishonour; and Miss Enid Rose, as Lady Chiltern, are equally praiseworthy.

*Manchester Daily Times, June 6.*

**"THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST."**

On Wednesday evening the Hoffe and Campbell company gave the first of four representations of Oscar Wilde's comedy, "The Importance of Being Earnest," and, as if by way of recompense for its numerical paucity, the audience showed an unmistakable adoption of the title in their appreciation of both the play and the players.

The piece abounds in smart epigrams, a fair sample being the reply of the country-bred girl to the society maiden who has expressed her surprise that flowers are so plentiful in the country. "Yes, flowers are almost as common here as the people are in town," but they really come so quickly that one is almost afraid to join in the laughter for fear of missing another.

Mr. J. Graeme Campbell and Mr. Monckton Hoffe play the parts of John Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff respectively, and make the most of the amusing situations caused by the exposition of their double lives; the part of the Butler Lane, played by Mr. W. H. Barker, proved that "It is a wise servant who knows his own master," and Miss Hester Newton as the Hon. Gwendoline Fairfax, Miss Nina Hope as Cicely Cardew, Miss Manners as Lady Bracknell, and the clever sketch of Miss Prism by Miss Lloyd-Desmond, all combine to make it an exceptionally smart and bright production.

The piece was preceded by an anonymously written curtain raiser, "Father Varien," played by Mr. Monckton Hoffe, Miss Hope, and Miss Lloyd-Desmond, but the audience evidently having come prepared for something in a lighter vein did not seem to take its sentimentalities sufficiently seriously.

*Sheffield Independent, June 7.*

**PLAYERS AND THE PLAY.**

(NOTES BY "LE REVEUR.")

It is suggested that the present revival of Oscar Wilde's plays may be but the prelude to a revival of the epigrammatic type of comedy. In recent years the epigram has gone the way of the pun, and short decisive sentences have characterised the dialogues of successful plays. In this, our dramatists have to some extent been following the French playwrights, whose works have been more forceful than witty so far through the twentieth century. A taste of the epigrammatic period at the Lyceum Theatre this week, however, has indicated to Sheffield audiences the intense interest of following a comedy where decided dramatic interest is spiced by brilliance of conversation between the characters. The style, of course, limits an author's field of work. His story must concern clever people or else clever language would appear ridiculous in their mouths. But the very emphatic fascination of a play like "An Ideal Husband" suggests that if a real successor could be found to Oscar Wilde, his plays would meet with enthusiastic appreciation.

**"A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE," AT HIS MAJESTY'S.**



MISS ELLIS JEFFREYS AS MRS. ALLENBY.



MISS MARION TERRY AS MRS. ARBUTHNOT.



MISS VIOLA TREE AS HESTER WORSLEY AND MR. CHARLES QUARTERMAINE AS GERALD ARBUTHNOT.



MR. TREE AS LORD ILLINGWORTH.

Photographs by F. W. Burford.

On Wednesday night Mr. Beerbohm Tree revived Oscar Wilde's fine play, "A Woman of No Importance," at His Majesty's Theatre, and, judging by the warm reception it secured, he has not gone amiss in his selection. With its clever characterisation, crisp dialogue, and enthralling theme, there is nothing to specially date the work, and the allusions to topical subjects fit in now just as appropriately as they did on its first production. The Smart Set here represented, and contrasted with the so-called Puritanical element, are quite up to date in their ways and doings, and may be met with any time; while there are, of course, many counterparts of Lord Illingworth knocking about the world.

The piece is splendidly cast. Mr. Tree himself takes up his old part of the selfish Lord Illingworth, which he carries through with consummate ease. Miss Marion Terry, who never fails in the sympathetic expression she gives to all her work, was altogether beyond praise as the much-tried Mrs. Arbuthnot. Mr. Charles Quartermaine made a wholly excellent Gerald, and Miss Viola Tree was well suited in the part of the wholesome-minded American girl, Hester Worsley. Mrs. Charles Calvert was a delightful Lady Hunstanton, with her happy-go-lucky ways of recounting past events; while Miss Ellis Jeffreys filled the part of the very much up-to-date smart married woman admirably; and excellent little sketches were forthcoming from Mr. Charles Allan, Mr. Edmund Maurice, Miss Kate Cutler, and Miss Kate Bishop.

The dresses are charming, and are cleverly suited to the widely differing styles of their three pretty wearers, Miss Ellis Jeffreys, as the ultra-smart Mrs. Allenby, makes a fascinating picture in the charming garden scene of the first act in a gown where simple white linen is united to costly and fashionable filet lace. The lace is mainly responsible for the making of the kimona bodice, and is there bordered with bands of the linen, while it opens in front over a chemisette of softly-scalloped Valenciennes, the transparent collar-band and the frilled elbow-sleeves being also of the finer lace; while the skirt is arranged in alternate panels of linen and lace, with double insertion bands of lace to further adorn the linen.

Miss Viola Tree in her turn wears a gown of white chiffon voile, whose gracefully-hanging folds merge at the hem into a deeply bordering band of turquoise tint, headed by a trail of closely-clustered roses embroidered in pale pink and yellow silks. The pleated draperies of the bodice are finished off with blue and white tassels, and again introduce the contrast of the bordering blue and brodered roses; while a soft fulness of lace comes in front and forms the frilled undersleeves.

Dainty Miss Kate Cutler also looks delightful in a crêpe-de-chine gown in the pinkish mauve of opening lilac buds, the crêpe being used in appliqué form together with velvet on the silk net of exactly the same tone, which figures on both skirt and bodice; while some filmy ivory-toned lace comes near the neck. Her Leghorn hat is trimmed with a wreath of softly-shaded pink roses caught together by a bow of pink silk ribbon whose ends—as long and wide as a sash—fall far down the skirt at the back. And then, too, there are other roses fastened on the handle of her pretty sunshade.

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Yorkshire Evening Post. June 24.

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Manchester Weekly Times  
June 6

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Yorkshire Telegraph. June 4.

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Sheffield Independent. June 7.

## PLAYERS AND THE PLAY.

(NOTES BY "LE REVEUR.")

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MR. TREE AS LORD ILLINGWORTH.

"A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE," AT HIS MAJESTY'S. I looked in at His Majesty's Theatre one evening after the alarms and excursions of the first night of this revival had ceased to disturb the atmosphere. My object was partly to see how the general public of theatre-goers received one of Oscar Wilde's triad of comedies. Crammed with creamy satin and lace were the stalls, muslin roses and other etheralities of costume made the dress circle like a bed of flowers. Woman had come to look at themselves in the dramatist's glass in a proportion of three to one. Very well, I was pleased to see, were taken the brilliant lines with which this play abounds, like all of Wilde's mature work. A young Irishman who has read little but thought a good deal leaned forward and whispered to me: "Why, it's as full of quotations as 'Hamlet.'" The whirligig of time has indeed brought its revenges, and the writer of "Lady Windermere's Fan" is secure of his place among the *weida sidera*.

As to the performance, it was interesting, but I felt might have been more interestingly done. One of the amusing secondary personages, the Ven. James Daubeny, D.D., might surely be in more skilful hands than those of Mr. Maurice. Mr. Maurice represents him as a farcical character, whereas the delicate satire of the part depended upon the unctuous suavity of the rendering. Mr. Eric Lewis would give delightfully these interesting details about "poor Mrs. Daubeny," whose mind is chiefly occupied with the events of her early childhood—I quote from memory. Mr. Tree, I think, takes the part of Lord Illingworth too slowly. Sometimes his pauses make one almost feel as if he had forgotten the words, a crime of which, I am sure, he would never be guilty. Otherwise he renders the *blasé* father of a strenuous son as to the paternal manner born. I tremble to think what this part would become in hands less expert than Mr. Tree's. Mrs. Calvert did pretty well as Lady Caroline Pontefract, but her vis-à-vis, Miss Kate Bishop, was not sufficiently gay and assured as the sister of the wicked Lord Weston; whereas graceful Miss Kate Cutler made a little gem of Lady Stutfield, in body, speech, and action. Miss Ellis Jeffreys' performance was less remarkable than her dress of gold paillettes or spangles, which captured one's gaze every time she made the slightest motion. I believe Mrs. Allenby was never yet so brilliant in dress as on this occasion. On leaving the theatre after their performance I felt that the mental difference between Wilde and Mr. Shaw is that between the Protogoras of the Platonic dialogues and the chauffeur into whom Mr. Shaw has breathed his own soul in "Man and Superman."

Full Daily News, 7 June, 1907

Following "The Idler" we are to have Mr. Monckton Hoffe's company in Oscar Wilde's play, "The Importance of Being Earnest," and which is meeting with such success at the Grand Theatre, Leeds, this week. The play is one of the cleverest written by Oscar Wilde. This is its first tour since its recent remarkable revival by Mr. Alexander at the St. James' Theatre.

Globe.

"Strauss' Salome," by Lawrence Gilman (John Lane), supplies a descriptive "guide to the opera," consisting of a résumé of the plot adapted from Oscar Wilde's play, and an exposition of the music set to the libretto by Richard Strauss. Mr. Gilman disavows critical intentions; but in admitting that much of the score is "designed quite frankly and obviously as sheer noise, intentional cacophony," he expresses an opinion endorsed by many genuine admirers of Strauss's wayward genius. The repellent nature of Wilde's version of the Biblical story is fully indicated by Mr. Gilman's analysis.

June 28, 1907

Sheffield Independent, June 4

PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS.

"AN IDEAL HUSBAND" AT THE LYCEUM THEATRE.

"A Woman of No Importance," one of the best known of the Oscar Wilde plays, is at present being produced to crowded houses in London, and perhaps to that fact is due in some measure the revival at the Lyceum Theatre last night of "An Ideal Husband" another of his works. The very name of the author still leaves an unpleasant impression, but there is an instance on record where the devil talked scripture, and the scripture was none the worse for it. And on the same principle Londoners, and Sheffield people, too, evidently fully agree that even though a man may be bad, the works he wrote before his fall may be good, and ought not to be allowed to be consigned to oblivion.

Especially can one say that with regard to "An Ideal Husband." It is a great play, and last night it was worthily acted. Seldom, indeed, is there heard such hearty applause at the end of each act. And that must distinctly be taken as a tribute to the actors, for admirable as is the piece it contains to many long speeches that in the hands of a poor company it would fall flat. As it was, it gripped the house.

The play reveals the author at his best as a keen student of human nature. Every character is delicately, yet firmly drawn. In his way he rivalled even Dickens, and one or two of the characters in the play are nothing else but caricatures. Dickensian exaggerations, of the persons who move in what is euphemistically termed "high society." But through it all runs a golden vein of cynicism and biting satire. Sometimes it appears in rich nuggets. For instance, "I have read somewhere that when the gods wish to punish us they answer our prayers;" or "Don't use big words; they mean so little." Take a third: "The man who can't talk morality twice over as a serious politician; there is nothing for him but botany, or the Church."

The action of the play only covers a period of 24 hours, but nevertheless it takes one back 14 or 15 years, to the time when Sir Robert Chiltern, now a rising Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, he-trayed a Cabinet secret of which he became possessed as a private secretary, and with the price of it laid the foundation of his fortune and career. The secret becomes known to a scheming unscrupulous woman, and just when Sir Robert is attaining the height of his ambition she seeks to compel him to bolster up an affair which he is about to denounce. His wife, a noble woman, saves him from succumbing to a terrible temptation. She does not know the cost to him, she thinks him an ideal husband. And in Parliament he denounces the fraudulent scheme even though he believes that the next day his dread secret will be out, and all England will ring with his ruin. Of course something happens to prevent that. In plays something always does. That is why, when they seem most real, they are most unreal.

In the presentation of the piece chief honours fall to Mr. Ernest E. Norris and Miss Vera Beringer. Miss Beringer had the unlovely character of the bewitchingly beautiful but despicable Mrs. Cheveley, and the irony in her voice as she toyed with her victim or dared them not to agree to her demands was splendidly assumed. The character, indeed, fitted her like a glove. And Mr. Norris, likewise, scored heavily. His was no easy role. He had so many different moods to portray, but he was always real, and therefore carried the audience with him. Mr. Goring, and the irascible Earl of Caversham, angry at his son's incurable business, found a clever exponent in Mr. Edward S. Petley. The ladies were equally commendable. Miss Enid Ross very capably presented the somewhat difficult part of Lady Chiltern, trusting her husband blindly until she had his sin from his own lips. Miss Dorothy Chard was a sweet Miss Mabel, and Miss Kate Chard and Miss Jeanette Warden admirably "took off" the scandal-mongering propensities of the "upper ten."

UNKNOWN PARIS:

THE EUREKA BAR. By X. MARCEL BOULESTIN.

WHEN in M. J. K. Huysman's novel "Au Rebus," des Esseintes begins his famous journey to London by having a cut from the joint and two vegetables at Austin's bar, opposite the Gare St. Lazare, I am convinced this neurotic hero didn't know his Paris thoroughly. Otherwise he would have started somewhere else; he would, in fact, have driven straight to the Rue des Mathurins to a more typically English establishment, more cosy and more aristocratic altogether, which, furthermore, has not been spoiled like Austin's by French waiters in dirty evening dress. I refer to Mrs. Hill's "Eureka Bar," a most quaint old place, left unchanged by the passing years, comparable to "Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese" without Dr. Johnson's chair and escritoire.

Seen from the street, No. 48, Rue des Mathurins offers no inducement to the careless passer-by to stop and wonder, nor is there anything to make him guess that hidden behind the humble door lurks a most curious *coin de Paris*; only a dull lantern hung at the entrance, and a few quiet, small, unpretentious capital letters on the meanly curtained windows, denote the tavern. Its appearance is not even mysterious, merely significant. That is the greatest charm of the place, and explains why so many flâneurs stroll day by day along this same pavement without remarking the "Eureka Bar." Maybe they are blinded by the sight of the Opera, that Parthenon of bourgeois architecture, sparkling, shivering in the sun, just above their heads.

But, as soon as you open the narrow door, how many memories welcome you on the very threshold, memories of a past actual enough to arouse our interests, yet remote enough to belong to history. I love to go there, and, sitting myself on one of the three antiquated stools, to listen to old Mrs. Hill's recollections. I never get tired of it. She stands in the bar and wipes the tumblers with a monotonous, circular, and unerring movement of the hand, smiling the while at pleasant souvenirs. She is never weary, too, of telling me all about her place; how she started it in 1869, "the year before the War, Sir," and how she has never moved from it since, nor altered it at all. A hundred times I have heard of all the celebrities who were wont to lounge in her back room, drink her whisky and eat the Irish stew she cooks *à miracle*; writers, jockeys, sportsmen, and crowned heads—for "the King used to come in here sometimes for a drink, Sir, when he was Prince of Wales!" And if she doesn't add "and such a nice gentleman, too!" at least I am sure she thinks it.

To be sure, the portrait of H.M. Edward VII. adorns the shelves, standing between a terrible Eiffel Tower made of carved wood and a photographic reproduction of the Crystal Palace, amidst the classic glasses and bottles of the Pot House. On the walls, too, hangs his likeness—here portrayed in a *Topical Times* supplement, and there in a coloured print at the Newmarket races, *anno* 1885. His Royal Highness wears knickerbockers, stockings, and spats, and a brownish bowler hat of an absurd shape—once smart; he chats, cigar in hand, with a stiff-looking Lord Rothschild and a pale blue-collared Duke of Hamilton. The Duchess of Montrose smiles upon their conversation. She is dressed in a very light frock of silky material, made of three fur-trimmed *volants* caught up on a "bustle." Oh, the vanished *tournures*, these children of the crinoline, looking like draped miniature poufs—how charming and ridiculous they were! As for her veil—short and heavily embroidered—it hangs from a Tyrolean hat, quite green and pathetic with its unique, pointed, pheasant feather. Her hand is reposing languidly on a tiny fringed parasol. Newmarket, 1885!

How deeply I deplore that I was too young then to appreciate the charm of this delightful period! What have I left to-day as a consolation? Only the "Eureka Bar," semi-caricatures, sundry sketches which appeared in the *Journal des Femmes*, a few *Punch* drawings; and the outmoded "Estampes Modernes." For in that period modern art was born, and sunflowers, lilies, and peacock feathers began to blossom on earthenware jars and on "artistic wall-papers"; long hair, plastered flat and parted in the middle, began to frame all the intellectual feminine foreheads; shapeless frocks of evanescent shades; and necklaces of unknown stones were to embellish all ladies who possessed a true Ibsenian soul—or believed they did; young men began to deliver æsthetic paradoxes and choice epigrams with a graceful wave of the hand, after Mr. Oscar Wilde, or to practise successfully the "gentle art of making enemies," after Mr. Whistler—imitating the while, without success, his brilliant "Nocturnes."

Yet, how far away and faint in the distance all this seems nowadays. And what is left of it? Heaps of half-medieval, half-modern crotchetes, a few nameless, artistic jewels, piles of affectedly-written books; hardly a *souvenir amusé*. For my part, as I didn't know these ineffable joys, these morbid souls, and these great people, I still admire them; but, of course . . . I don't see much of them. I was told some of these *ratés* are to be found yet on the left side of the Seine, or high up near the sky on Montmartre Hill. Surely it must be true. But I prefer to stay in the company of Mrs. Hill's sportsmen, always up-to-date; for Sport is never *démodé*.



Photo. F. W. Burford. MISS ELLIS JEFFREYS AS MRS. ALLENBY, IN "A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE."

ier and Bullionist. HEATRICAL ITEMS.

"A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE" HARRY TATE'S MOTOR.

For all the glamour one is accustomed to expect is quite a change to see a modern play at His Majesty's. For this reason Mr. Tree's revival of Oscar Wilde's powerful comedy "A Woman of No Importance" is doubly acceptable, irrespective of the pleasure afforded in reviving recollections of these erstwhile successes. As a compilation of brilliant epigrammatic sayings it would be hard to find its equal. In fact, if we may venture to say so, the action rather suffers thereby. A certain construction may also be detected in reason with latter-day dramatists, but that, all, is of small consequence. It is the key of the theme with which we are chiefly concerned, and in this respect it will certainly be admitted that the author knew his business. A woman of her youth is faced with the agonising prospect of relinquishing her son to her seducer, by which means the boy is assured of a brilliant future. This, however, does not so much constitute the main question as whether it is possible for the mother to make amends by an offer of marriage, the subject upon which the author gives us acts of brilliant comedy, so delightfully given with "smart" sayings as to entirely even the piece from the plane of emotional drama. The chief honours fall to Miss Marion Terry as Mrs. Tree, but admirable assistance is rendered by Miss Ellis Jeffreys, Miss Kate Cutler, Miss Tree and Mr. Quartermaine. The opportunity is so rare nowadays of seeing one of the late Oscar Wilde's plays that Mr. Tree is much to be thanked for having made a break in his ambitious productions to present the one under notice. The move has been successful is evidenced by box-office receipts at His Majesty's.

Daily Mirror, June 8.

ROME PLAY AT THE ROYALTY.

Objection Raised to Its Performance Because the Story Is Not Taken from the Bible.

Much surprise has been aroused by the announcement that "The Daughter of Herodias," a one-act musical play, is to be produced on Monday afternoon at the Royal Theatre, despite the fact that "Salome," Oscar Wilde's play on the same subject and many other plays dealing with Biblical subjects have been refused licences. "The Daughter of Herodias" is not a Biblical piece," said Miss Mabilia Daniell, who is to appear as Salome, to the *Daily Mirror* yesterday. "It does not, therefore, stand in the same category with Oscar Wilde's play, although the story of the two pieces is practically identical. "The author, Mr. Brinsley Trehan—a lineal descendant of Richard Brinsley Sheridan—has kept strictly to the story as told by Josephus. John the Baptist does not appear, and is never even mentioned by name, nor is his head brought on to the stage."

"A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE"  
 I looked in at His Majesty after the alarms and excursions this revival had ceased to dis- object was partly to see how theatre-goers received one of comedies. Crammed with or the stalls, muslin roses and costume made the dress circle Woman had come to look dramatist's glass in a proportion well, I was pleased to see, lines with which this play abounds mature work. A young Irishman but thought a good deal leaned to me: "Why, it's as full of quill. The whirligig of time has indeed and the writer of "Lady Windermere his place among the lucida side

As to the performance, it I felt might have been more One of the amusing secondary James Daubeny, D.D., might surely hands than those of Mr. Maude represents him as a farcical the delicate satire of the part unctuous suavity of the rendering would give delightfully these inter- "poor Mrs. Daubeny," whose mind with the events of her early childhood memory. Mr. Tree, I think, takes Illingworth too slowly. Sometimes one almost feel as if he had forgotten of which, I am sure, he would never wise he renders the blasé father of to the paternal manner born. I treat this part would become in hands less Tree's. Mrs. Calvert did pretty well Pontefract, but her vis-à-vis, Miss Kate sufficiently gay and assured as the Lord Weston; whereas graceful Miss little gem of Lady Stutfield, in body, Miss Ellis Jeffreys' performance was than her dress of gold paillettes or captured one's gaze every time she motion. I believe Mrs. Allenby was liant in dress as on this occasion. theatre after their performance I felt difference between Wilde and Mr. Shaw the Protagonas of the Platonic dis- chauffeur into whom Mr. Shaw has soul in "Man and Superman."

Globe.

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THE PLANET

June 29, 1907



W. & T. Downey

H.M. THE KING OF SIAM AND SONS. The King is now on a visit to England, and was present at the Garden Party at Windsor on Saturday.

**ART · MUSIC · AND THE · DRAMA ·**

Photo: F. W. Barford.  
 MISS MARION TERRY AS MRS. ARBUTHNOT, IN "A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE."  
 Photo: F. W. Barford.  
 MISS KATE CUTLER AS LADY STUTFIELD, IN "A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE," AT HIS MAJESTY'S.  
 Photo: F. W. Barford.  
 MISS ELLIS JEFFREYS AS MRS. ALLENBY, IN "A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE."

Literary World, June 1907.

Mr. Beerbohm Tree's revival at His Majesty's of Oscar Wilde's comedy, *A Woman of No Importance*, is a real success. It affords one of the brightest and pleasantest evenings for theatre-goers in London at the present time. The neat, crisp, witty dialogue leaves no room for a dull moment, and there are episodes in which the play rises out of mere 'airy persiflage' to points of strong dramatic effect. Mr. Tree's own impersonation of the very difficult part of the attractive, bad Lord Illingworth is wonderfully good in its naturalness and restraint; Mrs. Charles Calvert, as the good-natured, Malapropian Lady Hunstanton, is delightful, and has an excellent foil in Miss Kate Bishop as the severe Lady Caroline; Miss Ellis Jeffreys is exceedingly clever and entertaining—as well as pretty—as the 'smart' and naughty Mrs. Allenby; and Miss Marion Terry is as charming as ever as the wronged good mother, Mrs. Arbuthnot. Miss Viola Tree adapts herself with distinct skill to the part of the beautiful American heiress and Puritan; Mr. Quatermaine's Gerald Arbuthnot is quite good; and Mr. Edmund Maurice makes a very amusing caricature of the Archdeacon. The other parts are well filled, and the play runs with admirable ease and smoothness, accompanied by a perpetual light ripple of laughter in the audience.

Financier and Bullionist

THEATRICAL ITEMS.

"A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE"—HARRY TATE'S MOTOR.

After all the glamour one is accustomed to expect, it is quite a change to see a modern play at His Majesty's. For this reason Mr. Tree's revival of Oscar Wilde's powerful comedy "A Woman of No Importance" is doubly acceptable, irrespective of the pleasure afforded in reviving recollections of these erstwhile successes. As a compilation of brilliant epigrammatic sayings it would be hard to find its equal. In fact, if we may venture to say so, the action rather suffers thereby. A crudity in construction may also be detected in comparison with latter-day dramatists, but that, after all, is of small consequence. It is the poignancy of the theme with which we are chiefly concerned, and in this respect it will certainly be conceded that the author knew his business. A woman betrayed in her youth is faced with the agonising problem of relinquishing her son to her seducer, by whose means the boy is assured of a brilliant career. This, however, does not so much constitute the main question as whether it is possible for the man to make amends by an offer of marriage. This is the subject upon which the author gives us four acts of brilliant comedy, so delightfully interwoven with "smart" sayings as to entirely remove the piece from the plane of emotional drama. As played by Mr. Tree's company it is par excellence. Chief honours fall to Miss Marion Terry and Mr. Tree, but admirable assistance is rendered by Miss Ellis Jeffreys, Miss Kate Cutler, Miss Viola Tree and Mr. Quatermaine. The opportunity is so rare nowadays of seeing one of the late Oscar Wilde's plays that Mr. Tree is much to be commended for having made a break in his ambitious productions to present the one under notice. That the move has been successful is evidenced by the box-office receipts at His Majesty's.

THE DRAMA.

Mr. Beerbohm Tree is always interesting, and by the revival of *A Woman of No Importance*, by Oscar Wilde, he has given us an opportunity for reflection. Produced originally fourteen years ago at the Haymarket Theatre, Mr. Wilde's play created something of a sensation, as the author's genius for brilliant paradox brought him to the front rank of writers for the stage. Between then and now much has happened in connection with the author. The promise displayed in *A Woman of No Importance* was fulfilled in succeeding works. The author's powers of paradox were perhaps carried a little too far; but *Lady Windermere's Fan* proved the most brilliant play of its day, and was successfully revived at the end of last year. The preacher referred to by John A. in his sermon and blood were really present in the Sacrament of Real Presence simply meant that Christ's Body and blood were really present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The doctrine of the Real Presence of the Eucharist, yet objected to for their temporal food, yet objected to the fact that people held their hearts to thank God for the Sacrament. It was, he said, a curious thing to commemorate the institution of the Blessed Sacrament on Sunday, the Rev. F. Hallam said Church on Sunday, the Rev. F. Hallam said Preaching at High Mass at St. Andrew's St. Andrew's. REMARKABLE SERMON AT CONFUS CHRISTII.

Daily Mirror, June 8.

SALOME PLAY AT THE ROYALTY.

No Objection Raised to Its Performance Because the Story Is Not Taken from the Bible.

Much surprise has been aroused by the announcement that "The Daughter of Herodias," a one-act musical play, is to be produced on Monday afternoon at the Royalty Theatre, despite the fact that "Salome," Oscar Wilde's play on the same subject and many other plays dealing with Biblical subjects have been refused licences. "The Daughter of Herodias" is not a Biblical piece," said Miss Mabilia Daniel, who is to appear as Salome, to the *Daily Mirror* yesterday. "It does not, therefore, stand in the same category with Oscar Wilde's play, although the story of the two pieces is practically identical. "The author, Mr. Brinsley Treheane—a lineal descendant of Richard Brinsley Sheridan—has kept strictly to the story as told by Josephus. John the Baptist does not appear, and is never even mentioned by name, nor is his head brought on to the stage."

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As to the performance, it was I felt might have been more. One of the amusing secondary parts James Daubeny, D.D., might surely have had hands than those of Mr. Maur...

Full Daily News, 7 June, 1907

Following "The Idler" we are to have Mr. Monckton Hoffe's company in Oscar Wilde's play, "The Importance of Being Earnest," and which is meeting with such success at the Grand Theatre, Leeds, this week...

Globe.

"Strauss' ballad (John Lane), superlative opera," consisting of an adaptation from Oscar Wilde's exposition of the Richard Strauss critical intentions...

THE PLANET

June 29, 1907



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ART · MUSIC · AND THE · DRAMA ·



MISS MARION TERRY AS MRS. ARBUTHNOT, IN "A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE."



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Lead Budget, June 8, 1907

"THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST." Artificial in design and construction, "The Importance of Being Earnest" has still easily survived its enforced exile, and now, on its revival at the Leeds Grand Theatre this week, it is just as fresh and brilliant and entertaining as ever.

Working Man, 8 June 1907

THE DRAMA.

Mr. Beerbohm Tree is always interesting, and by the revival of A Woman of No Importance, by Oscar Wilde, he has given us an opportunity for reflection. Produced originally fourteen years ago at the Haymarket Theatre, Mr. Wilde's play created something of a sensation, as the author's genius for brilliant paradox brought him to the front rank of writers for the stage.

In the present revival of A Woman of No Importance, no traces of age can be found, and the smart lines, witty answers, and recurring paradoxes produce the same effect. The author certainly over-worked the paradox habit when writing the first act; but when we get well on with the plot, the epigrams are well balanced. The cast Mr. Tree has at present interpreting Mr. Wilde's comedy is satisfactory in all characters except that of the American girl.

It will be interesting to notice with what success the revival meets, as the tragic death of the author has left the stage without any successor in his particular style of writing plays. Perhaps Mr. Lewis Waller may be tempted to revive Mr. Wilde's An Ideal Husband! At any rate, it is to be hoped so.

Financier and Bullionist

THEATRICAL ITEMS.

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"A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE," AT HIS MAJESTY'S.

I looked in at His Majesty's Theatre one evening after the alarums and excursions of the first night of this revival had ceased to disturb the atmosphere. My object was partly to see how the general public of theatre-goers received one of Oscar Wilde's triad of comedies. Crammed with creamy satin and lace were the stalls, muslin roses and other etherealities of costume made the dress circle like a bed of flowers. Woman had come to look at themselves in the dramatist's glass in a proportion of three to one. Very well, I was pleased to see, were taken the brilliant lines with which this play abounds, like all of Wilde's mature work. A young Irishman who has read little but thought a good deal leaned forward and whispered to me: "Why, it's as full of quotations as 'Hamlet.'" The whirligig of time has indeed brought its revenges, and the writer of "Lady Windermere's Fan" is secure of his place among *the lucida sidera*.

As to the performance, it was interesting, but I felt might have been more interestingly done. One of the amusing secondary personages, the Ven. James Daubeny, D.D., might surely be in more skilful hands than those of Mr. Maurice. Mr. Maurice represents him as a farcical character, whereas the delicate satire of the part depended upon the unctuous suavity of the rendering. Mr. Eric Lewis would give delightfully these interesting details about "poor Mrs. Daubeny," whose mind is chiefly occupied with the events of her early childhood—I quote from memory. Mr. Tree, I think, takes the part of Lord Illingworth too slowly. Sometimes his pauses make one almost feel as if he had forgotten the words, a crime of which, I am sure, he would never be guilty. Otherwise he renders the *blasé* father of a strenuous son as to the paternal manner born. I tremble to think what this part would become in hands less expert than Mr. Tree's. Mrs. Calvert did pretty well as Lady Caroline Pontefract, but her vis-à-vis, Miss Kate Bishop, was not sufficiently gay and assured as the sister of the wicked Lord Weston; whereas graceful Miss Kate Cutler made a little gem of Lady Stutfield, in body, speech, and action. Miss Ellis Jeffreys' performance was less remarkable than her dress of gold paillettes or spangles, which captured one's gaze every time she made the slightest motion. I believe Mrs. Allenby was never yet so brilliant in dress as on this occasion. On leaving the theatre after their performance I felt that the mental difference between Wilde and Mr. Shaw is that between the Protogoras of the Platonic dialogues and the chauffeur into whom Mr. Shaw has breathed his own soul in "Man and Superman."

## PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS.

"AN IDEAL HUSBAND" AT THE  
LYCEUM THEATRE.

"A Woman of No Importance," one of the best known of the Oscar Wilde plays, is at present being produced to crowded houses in London, and perhaps to that fact is due in some measure the revival at the Lyceum Theatre last night of "An Ideal Husband" another of his works. The very name of the author still leaves an unpleasant impression, but there is an instance on record where the devil talked scripture, and the scripture was none the worse for it. And on the same principle Londoners, and Sheffield people, too, evidently fully agree that even though a man may be bad, the works he wrote before his fall may be good, and ought not to be allowed to be consigned to oblivion.

Especially can one say that with regard to "An Ideal Husband." It is a great play, and last night it was worthily acted. Seldom, indeed, is there heard such hearty applause at the end of each act. And that must distinctly be taken as a tribute to the actors, for admirable as is the piece it contains so many long speeches that in the hands of a poor company it would fall flat. As it was, it gripped the house.

The play reveals the author at his best as a keen student of human nature. Every character is delicately, yet firmly drawn. In his way he rivalled even Dickens, and one or two of the characters in the play are nothing else but caricatures. Dickensian exaggerations, of the persons who move in what is euphemistically termed "high Society." But through it all runs a golden vein of cynicism and biting satire. Sometimes it appears in rich nuggets. For instance, "I have read somewhere that when the gods wish to punish us they answer our prayers;" or "Don't use big words; they mean so little." Take a third: "The man who can't talk morality twice a week to large and immoral audiences is quite over as a serious politician; there is nothing for him but botany, or the Church."

The action of the play only covers a period of 24 hours, but nevertheless it takes one back 14 or 15 years, to the time when Sir Robert Chiltern, now a rising Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, betrayed a Cabinet secret of which he became possessed as a private secretary, and with the price of it laid the foundation of his fortune and career. The secret becomes known to a scheming unscrupulous woman, and just when Sir Robert is attaining the height of his ambition she seeks to compel him to bolster up an affair which he is about to denounce. His wife, a noble woman, saves him from succumbing to a terrible temptation. She does not know the cost to him, she thinks him an ideal husband. And in Parliament he denounces the fraudulent scheme even though he believes that the next day his dread secret will be out, and all England will ring with his ruin. Of course something happens to prevent that. In plays something always does. That is why, when they seem most real, they are most unreal.

In the presentment of the piece chief honours fall to Mr. Ernest E. Norris and Miss Vera Beringer. Miss Beringer had the unlovely character of the bewitchingly beautiful but despicable Mrs. Cheveley, and the irony in her voice as she toyed with her victims or dared them not to agree to her demands was splendidly assumed. The character, indeed, fitted her like a glove. And Mr. Norris, likewise, scored heavily. His was no easy role. He had so many different moods to portray, but he was always real, and therefore carried the audience with him. Mr. Austen Melroy was very acceptable indeed as Lord Goring, and the irascible Earl of Caversham, angry at his son's incurable laziness, found a clever exponent in Mr. Edward S. Petley. The ladies were equally commendable. Miss Enid Ross very capably presented the somewhat difficult part of Lady Chiltern, trusting her husband blindly until she had his sin from his own lips. Miss Dorothy Chard was a sweet Miss Mabel, and Miss Kate Chard and Miss Janette Warden admirably took on the scandal-mongering propensities of the "upper ten."

Full Daily News. 7 June. 1907

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Following "The Idler" we are to have Mr Monckton Hoffe's company in Oscar Wilde's play, "The Importance of Being Earnest," and which is meeting with such success at the Grand Theatre, Leeds, this week. The play written by Oscar Wilde. This is its first tour since its recent remarkable revival by Mr Alexander at the St James' Theatre.

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Globe.

June 28, 1907

"Strauss' 'Salome,'" by Lawrence Gilman (John Lane), supplies a descriptive "guide to the opera," consisting of a résumé of the plot adapted from Oscar Wilde's play, and an exposition of the music set to the libretto by Richard Strauss. Mr. Gilman disavows critical intentions; but in admitting that much of the score is "designed quite frankly and obviously as sheer noise, intentional cacophony," he expresses an opinion endorsed by many genuine admirers of Strauss's wayward genius. The repellent nature of Wilde's version of the Biblical story is fully indicated by Mr. Gilman's analysis.

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## UNKNOWN PARIS :

THE EUREKA BAR. By X. MARCEL BOULESTIN.

WHEN in M. J. K. Huysman's novel "Au Rebours," des Esseintes begins his famous journey to London by having a cut from the joint and two vegetables at Austin's bar, opposite the Gare St. Lazare, I am convinced this neurotic hero didn't know his Paris thoroughly. Otherwise he would have started somewhere else; he would, in fact, have driven straight to the Rue des Mathurins to a more typically English establishment, more cosy and more aristocratic altogether, which, furthermore, has not been spoilt like Austin's by French waiters in dirty evening dress. I refer to Mrs. Hill's "Eureka Bar," a most quaint old place, left unchanged by the passing years, comparable to "Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese" without Dr. Johnson's chair and *escritoire*.

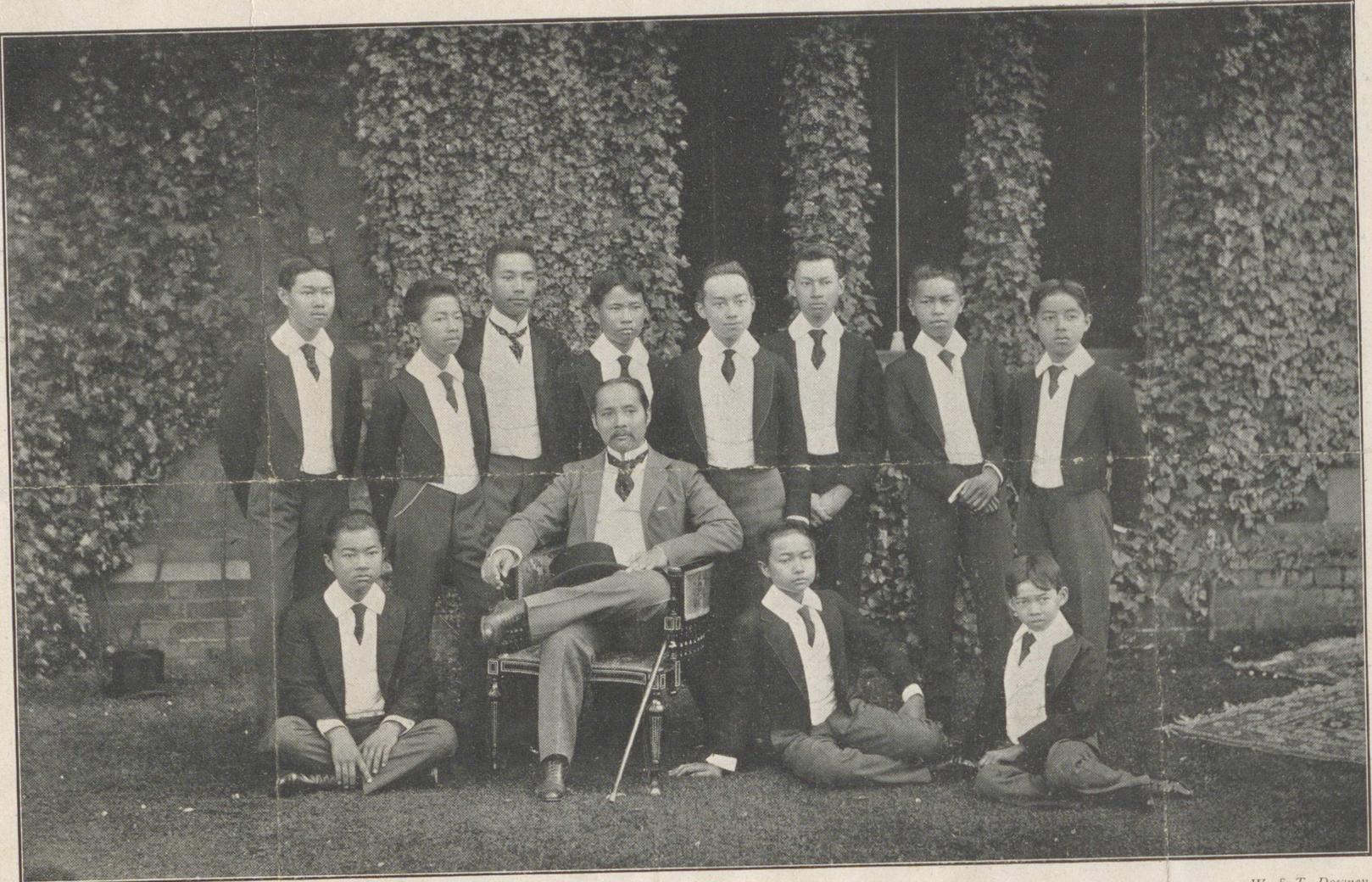
Seen from the street, No. 48, Rue des Mathurins offers no inducement to the careless passer-by to stop and wonder, nor is there anything to make him guess that hidden behind the humble door lurks a most curious *coin de Paris*; only a dull lantern hung at the entrance, and a few quiet, small, unpretentious capital letters on the meanly curtained windows, denote the tavern. Its appearance is not even mysterious, merely significant. That is the greatest charm of the place, and explains why so many flâneurs stroll day by day along this same pavement without remarking the "Eureka Bar." Maybe they are blinded by the sight of the Opera, that Parthenon of bourgeois architecture, sparkling, shivering in the sun, just above their heads.

But, as soon as you open the narrow door, how many memories welcome you on the very threshold, memories of a past actual enough to arouse our interests, yet remote enough to belong to history. I love to go there, and, sitting myself on one of the three antiquated stools, to listen to old Mrs. Hill's recollections. I never get tired of it. She stands in the bar and wipes the tumblers with a monotonous, circular, and unerring movement of the hand, smiling the while at pleasant souvenirs. She is never weary, too, of telling me all about her place; how she started it in 1869, "the year before the War, Sir," and how she has never moved from it since, nor altered it at all. A hundred times I have heard of all the celebrities who were wont to lounge in her back room, drink her whisky and eat the Irish stew she cooks *à miracle*; writers, jockeys, sportsmen, and crowned heads—for "the King used to come in here sometimes for a drink, Sir, when he was Prince of Wales!" And if she doesn't add "and such a nice gentleman, too!" at least I am sure she thinks it.

To be sure, the portrait of H.M. Edward VII. adorns the shelves, standing between a terrible Eiffel Tower made of carved wood and a photographic reproduction of the Crystal Palace, amidst the classic glasses and bottles of the Pot House. On the walls, too, hangs his likeness—here portrayed in a *Topical Times* supplement, and there in a coloured print at the Newmarket races, *anno* 1885. His Royal Highness wears knickerbockers, stockings, and spats, and a brownish bowler hat of an absurd shape—once smart; he chats, cigar in hand, with a stiff-looking Lord Rothschild and a pale blue-collared Duke of Hamilton. The Duchess of Montrose smiles upon their conversation. She is dressed in a very light frock of silky material, made of three fur-trimmed *volants* caught up on a "bustle." Oh, the vanished *tournures*, these children of the crinoline, looking like draped miniature poufs—how charming and ridiculous they were! As for her veil—short and heavily embroidered—it hangs from a Tyrolean hat, quite green and pathetic with its unique, pointed, pheasant feather. Her hand is reposing languidly on a tiny fringed parasol. Newmarket, 1885! . . .

How deeply I deplore that I was too young then to appreciate the charm of this delightful period! What have I left to-day as a consolation? Only the "Eureka Bar," semi-caricatures, sundry sketches which appeared in the *Journal des Demoiselles*, a few *Punch* drawings, and the outmoded "Estampes Modernes." For in that period modern art was born, and sunflowers, lilies, and peacock feathers began to blossom on earthenware jars and on "artistic wall-papers"; long hair, plastered flat and parted in the middle, began to frame all the intellectual feminine foreheads; shapeless frocks of evanescent shades; and necklaces of unknown stones were to embellish all ladies who possessed a true Ibsenian soul—or believed they did; young men began to deliver æsthetic paradoxes and choice epigrams with a graceful wave of the hand, after Mr. Oscar Wilde, or to practise successfully the "gentle art of making enemies," after Mr. Whistler—imitating the while, without success, his brilliant "Nocturnes." . . .

Yet, how far away and faint in the distance all this seems nowadays. And what is left of it? Heaps of half-mediæval, half-modern cretonnes, a few nameless, artistic jewels, piles of affectedly-written books; hardly a *souvenir amusé*. For my part, as I didn't know these ineffable joys, these morbid souls, and these great people, I still admire them; but, of course . . . I don't see much of them. I was told some of these *ratés* are to be found yet on the left side of the Seine, or high up near the sky on Montmartre Hill. Surely it must be true. But I prefer to stay in the company of Mrs. Hill's sportsmen, always up-to-date; for Sport is never *démodé*.



H.M. THE KING AND HIS SONS.  
 The King is now on a visit to England, and was present at the Garden Party at Windsor on Saturday.

W. & T. Downey

# ART · MUSIC · AND · THE · DRAMA ·



*Photo. F. W. Burford.*  
MISS MARION TERRY AS  
MRS. ARBUTHNOT, IN "A  
WOMAN OF NO IMPORT-  
ANCE."  
2019-03-18

*Photo. F. W. Burford.*  
MISS KATE CUTLER AS LADY STUTFIELD, IN "A WOMAN  
OF NO IMPORTANCE," AT HIS MAJESTY'S.

*Photo. F. W. Burford.*  
MISS ELLIS JEFFREYS AS  
MRS. ALLENBY, IN "A  
WOMAN OF NO IMPORT-  
ANCE."  
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Jissen Women's University Library

Literary World June 1907.

Financial ...

# Literary World.

June 1907.

Mr. Beerbohm Tree's revival at His Majesty's of Oscar Wilde's comedy, *A Woman of No Importance*, is a real success. It affords one of the brightest and pleasantest evenings for theatre-goers in London at the present time. The neat, crisp, witty dialogue leaves no room for a dull moment, and there are episodes in which the play rises out of mere 'airy persiflage' to points of strong dramatic effect. Mr. Tree's own impersonation of the very difficult part of the attractive, bad Lord Illingworth is wonderfully good in its naturalness and restraint; Mrs. Charles Calvert, as the good-natured, Malapropian Lady Hunstanton, is delightful, and has an excellent foil in Miss Kate Bishop as the severe Lady Caroline; Miss Ellis Jeffreys is exceedingly clever and entertaining—as well as pretty—as the 'smart' and naughty Mrs. Allenby; and Miss Marion Terry is as charming as ever as the wronged good mother, Mrs. Arbuthnot. Miss Viola Tree adapts herself with distinct skill to the part of the beautiful American heiress and Puritan; Mr. Quartermaine's Gerald Arbuthnot is quite good; and Mr. Edmund Maurice makes a very amusing caricature of the Archdeacon. The other parts are well filled, and the play runs with admirable ease and smoothness, accompanied by a perpetual light ripple of laughter in the audience.