



Jissen Women's University Rare Books
Honma Hisao Collection

Digital Archives of Mason Library

Oscar Wilde
Scrapbook

Vol. 9

THE CONFESSIONS OF A THEORIST.

Mr. Bernard Shaw's dramatic criticisms which appeared in the *Saturday Review* during the years 1894-1898, and are now reprinted, are even more interesting as a revelation of himself than for the importance of the work they dealt with. Among other things they show us how he has never understood Shakespeare or seen through Ibsen. It is true that extraordinary interest attaches to the period when the English theatre was struggling under the assault of everything that severs Tom Taylor from Mr. Shaw, when Oscar Wilde led the town, when Stevenson and Henley, Trill and Hichens, Mr. Henry James himself, were produced upon the stage, when Burne-Jones was engaged to design the costumes of "King Arthur" at the Lyceum, and Sir Laurence Alma-Tadema staged "Julius Caesar" at Her Majesty's. It was before the days of the Stage Society, Maeterlinck, and the Court Theatre, but it was a tempestuous time, torn and thrilled by Ibsen and Echeverry, and the rise of Mr. Jones and Mr. Pinero, and the battle of the ancients and the Americans with the new taste and the new knowledge. If there was any writer capable of doing justice to this tempestuous time, it was Mr. Shaw, who flung himself upon it week by week with unflinching liveliness and generosity of his own ideas in the hope of impressing everybody to write and act and manage as he was passionately convinced they ought.

Taken together, and the rest of the *Saturday Review* of the period excluded, Mr. Shaw's criticisms gain immensely. Everybody interested in the stage, especially everybody who did not see the plays as they came out, should read them. Fortunately for the latter class of persons, Mr. Shaw never troubled at the end of the week to retell, in the fashion of most dramatic critics, the twice-told tale of the plot of the play before him, but plunged straight into criticism of its stuff, its construction, its presentation. And as most of the plays worth remembering at all are by this time well known, the reader who did not see them is proportionately better off.

In so doing Mr. Shaw gave himself away, and although this may not have been very apparent when the process was spread over four years, it cannot be missed when compressed into two volumes. For this book exhibits Mr. Shaw as a theorist, a man of a formula, a very Robespierre of the drama. Never was there a man so much under the domination of his own mind. Never did nature play such an odd trick as when she put the fire of literary genius into that inelastic and academic head. Mr. Shaw's formulaic treatment almost takes us back to the days when Mile. Mars felt constrained to cut Victor Hugo's line—

"Vous êtes mon lion, superbe et généreux" and to recite in its place—
"Vous êtes, monseigneur, superbe et généreux," the fallacy in both cases being the same, the desire to reduce life to a satisfying formula. Mile. Mars' formula was classicism; Mr. Shaw's is progress.

In two lines he gives us his theory of art when he writes of "The Ideal Husband": "It is useless to describe a play which has no thesis: which is, in the present integrity, a play and nothing else." For a play which does not contain a thesis, something to prick the world on to adopt a new attitude, he has, as Americans put it, no use; and the writer of such may be marked high as a poet, a person of eloquence, wit, power, or delicate intellect, but he will be damned by Mr. Shaw as pessimist, anarchist, and no dramatist, because his work does not strike a blow in the cause of "progress." Now we can see how Mr. Shaw goes wrong over Ibsen and Shakespeare, who occupy the greater part of this book. Shakespeare, who saw life as it was, at close grips with reality, is to him an exquisite poet, indeed, but a mountebank of the commonest intelligence, drifting aimlessly on a sea of nebulous pessimism, with no moral end in view; while Ibsen, on the score of his exclusive interest in ethics is welcomed as mightiest among the tragedians. In later moments Mr. Shaw may admit that he has read absent qualities into the great constructor's work and that Ibsen wasted his tremendous technique and penetrating psychology on pathological studies of an essentially provincial character; but the contrast drawn in this long series of brilliant essays admits of no doubt. Mr. Shaw burns with a desire for reality, but he cannot see it except through the opera-glass of a social theory.

This is not to say that Mr. Shaw's criticism is not of exceptional merit. If he applies a false standard to the subject of art he nevertheless applies a standard to the motley works through which he sat or from which he fled that gives as regards their contents astonishingly right results. His experience and taste in music and painting, his acquaintance with men and affairs, his immense knowledge of stage technique, and his enthusiasm for everything genuine in writing and acting combined to give him an interest and an authority in writing on the theatre seldom enjoyed by one man. As instances of his fairness may be cited the encouragement he consistently offered to works incongenial to his mind, such as Mr. James's "Guy Domville" and "The Matchmaker."

Mr. James Huneker has been allowed, as the price for very badly editing the reprints, to write an unnecessary introduction, and is apparently responsible for the exasperating absence of any index and an outrageous number of misprints.

GAUITY THEATRE ARRANGEMENTS.

Having been closed for the summer vacation, the Gaiety Theatre will open on Monday next for the autumn season, which promises to be highly successful. This will certainly be so if attractive bookings can bring success, or the management of the theatre has completed arrangements for visits to Dublin of one of the most notable plays and players of the day. To commence with there will be three works by Bernard Shaw next week. That in itself is a remarkable announcement, as Irish playgoers have only a slight—at least, the stage—acquaintance with the work of their compatriot. The plays selected are "Arms and the Man," "How He Lied to Her Husband," and "The Man of Destiny." The latter work has already been played in Dublin, and it was so favourably received that its reappearance will be looked forward to with pleasure. The plays selected are by the members of the Players' Club, amongst whom there are many capable artists. As regards musical comedies, there are many announced—notably, "Miss Hook of Holland," which has had a remarkable run in London. Another very successful piece of a similar kind, "The Dairyman's Daughter," will be presented by an Edwards' company, in which will be included Miss Phyllis Dare, who is assured a cordial reception. Mr. George Edwards' latest successes at the Gaiety are many and varied. Among other musical plays announced are such favourites as "The Blue Moon" and "The Lady Slavey." There will also be a revival of some of Oscar Wilde's brilliant plays. During the season the theatre will be visited by such distinguished actors as H. B. Irving, Forbes Robertson and Miss Gertrude Elliott, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, and Madame Sarah Bernhardt. No Gaiety season would be complete without a visit from Mr. Edward Terry, with whom the Dublin public will be heartily glad to renew its acquaintance. There would also be a serious gap if Mr. and Mrs. F. R. Benson were not due in Dublin. Their engagement will be received with satisfaction. The Carl Rosa Opera Company's visit will also give pleasure, and it is gratifying to find they will include some new operas in their list. The Trinity College Dramatic Club is announced to have a short season also. It has been decided that the pantomime this year will be "Red Riding Hood," which will be on a scale in keeping with the traditions of the Gaiety in the matter of pantomimes.

San M. Wales Daily Post
July 30 1907

GRAND THEATRE, SWANSEA.

"The Importance of being Earnest" is one of the most successful of Oscar Wilde's plays—is being presented by Mr. Monckton Hoffe's Company at the Grand Theatre, and though the proportions of the house were limited on Monday evening, there was no lack of appreciation as regards the reception bestowed. For scintillating dialogue and terse epigram, Oscar Wilde ranks in the forefront, and there is much in the brilliant comedy of "The Importance of being Earnest" that stamps it outright as the work of a master hand, and one begins to realise why many who had all along been hostile to the author as a man and as a writer became Wilde's men heart and soul after having witnessed this piece. It is a play characteristic of the best qualities of Wilde, drawn with fine lines and the touch of genius, and in the hands of Mr. Monckton Hoffe's capable company lacks nothing in the way of effect and expression. Mr. Hoffe himself takes a leading role—that of "Algernon Noncreff"—which he sustains with every success. He is ably supported allround, and in his revival of an undoubtedly clever play should meet with that measure of popular support to which he is justly entitled. It is preceded by a bright little curtain raiser, "A Breezy Morning."

A BOW-STREET GAOLER.

WELL-KNOWN OFFICER RETIRES.

By the retirement of Assistant-Gaoler Soper, after twenty-five years' service in "the force," those who for various reasons have taken an interest in the proceedings at Bow-street Police-court will be forward, miss a familiar and ever-kindly face. Soper was one of those men who seemed naturally fitted for the somewhat difficult and trying position to which, in the course of his duty, he found himself committed. Brought up under the tuition in the art of "gaolerdom" by such past-masters in it as Sergeant White and Sergeant Bush, Soper soon proved himself a person well adapted by tact and temper to be entrusted with the management of prisoners convicted or under remand—and only those who have seen the procession of such persons, male and female, and of every description of temperament, who daily crowd the cells of our metropolitan police-courts, know what the task of dealing with them means.

Soper was, above all things, the steadfast friend of juvenile delinquents; but the stout, strongly-built man with the keen, kindly eyes was, on the other hand, a terror to sinners of mature years. His memory for such never seemed to fail. More than one magistrate has expressed himself amazed at the accuracy of Soper's recollection. Soper not only never forgot a face, he had a faculty for remembering its associations. Not once says the *Evening News* was he proved wrong when the book came into use for verification purposes.

No officer has perhaps had a more remarkable collection of celebrated criminals through his hands than the "memory man."

To realise this one has only to glance at the records of famous criminal cases for which the court has proved the stage. The railed enclosure of which Soper was custodian held, for instance, Gallagher, Wilson, Curtin, and Whitehead, the desperate dynamitards who plotted in 1883; O'Donnell, who shot Carey, the Phoenix Park informer, on the high seas; Oscar Wilde and Jabez Balfour, Dr. Jameson and his raiders, at the end of 1895, appeared in a row alongside Soper, who had an exciting tussle with the cheering mob in court, many of whom wanted to shake hands with the prisoners.

Soper's activity on that occasion is immortalised in the files of the illustrated papers, a reference to which shows Soper as a prominent figure in most of the sketches taken in court.

There was another wild scene at Bow-street in 1898, when the manslaughter of a servant named Popeye was investigated, and the girl's mistress was the subject of hostile demonstrations. Colonel Lynch, Whitaker Wright, and Monte Carlo Wells, the "man who broke the bank," and incidentally also broke a number of confiding members of the British public, were also amongst those with whom Soper came into official contact.

2 AUGUST, 1907

MORNING LEADER.

BYGONE BOW-ST.

ASSISTANT-GAOLERS' MEMORIES OF THE PAST.

"Data," of Bow-st., has retired. "Data" was Assistant-gaoler Soper, who from day to day for many years kept guard over the stream of human wreckage which flowed through the dock at Bow-st. Police-court, and, having a wonderful memory for faces and facts, he became a living book of reference, to which the magistrates often resorted for information as to a prisoner's career. Soper joined the police force in 1831, and when Bow-st. Police-court was opened he was made dock constable. His reminiscences of criminals who have passed under his official care would make interesting reading, for he has a memory stocked with the details of some of the most notorious incidents in criminal history.

Could Write a Book.

"I could write a book," Soper told a representative of this journal yesterday, "of the people who have passed through my hands and the historic cases which have been tried at Bow-st." Among them he mentioned Gallagher, Wilson, Curtin and Whitehead, who plotted to blow up the Tower of London in 1883; O'Donnell, who murdered Carey, famous as the Phoenix-park informer, Oscar Wilde, Jabez Balfour, Dr. Jameson, Col. Lynch, Monte Carlo Wells, Whitaker Wright, and Prince, the murderer of William Terriss.

These are the more notorious ones, but for years his memory has been storing up records against the old criminals who are frequently in the dock, and garnishing those records with stories rescued from the stream of tragedy and comedy flowing before the magistrate.

Played Two Parts.

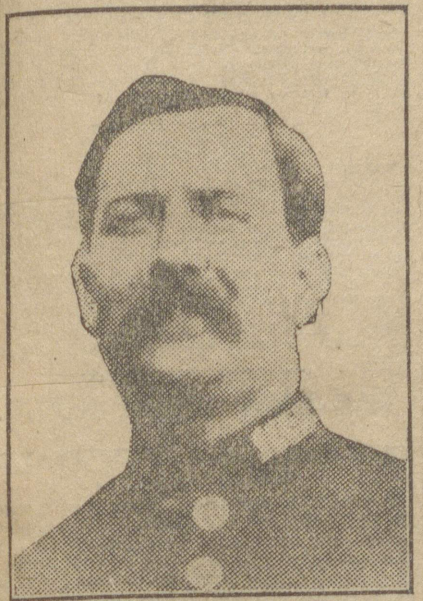
When Soper had a youthful offender in the dock he was the fatherly man, comforting to the best of his ability the youngster. When, however, the old sinner came along "Data" revealed the inordinating secrets of the offender's past.

At his retirement he was duly thanked for his services and the manner in which he had carried out his duties by Sir Albert de Rutzen, the presiding magistrate. His colleagues have presented him with a handsome gold watch. He retires on a full pension.

BOW-STREET "DATAS."

GAOLERS' REMARKABLE GIFT OF MEMORY.

A familiar figure has been lost to Bow-street Police Court in the retirement of the dock-officer, Assistant-Gaoler Soper, Soper, who joined the force in 1831, has been the



ASSISTANT-GAOLER SOPER.
(Photo Parks Press Studio.)

dock-constable for nearly twenty-six years. He took the office on the first day the building was opened, and since then has had some of the most notorious criminals of modern times in his care. He was known as the "Data" of Bow-street, on account of his wonderful memory for faces. He seldom forgot the face of a man or woman he had once seen, no matter what length of time had elapsed. This gift of memory was his special recommendation for the post. Without reference to the records he could all the magistrates, on the instant, the previous conviction or convictions of a man in the dock, so far back as seven or eight years. To his associates in the inner circle of the court he was known as "Don't Cry." He had a tender regard for small boys in trouble, and habits often heard him whispering, "Don't cry!" to poor boys within the dock. Soper is one of the officers who got recorded in the "Bloody Sunday" riots in Trafalgar-square. Amongst prisoners he has guarded in the dock were the notorious seven dynamitards of 1883—Gallagher, Whitehead, and others—who attempted to blow up the Tower of London and Government buildings. He also had the care of O'Donnell, who was executed at Newgate for the murder of Carey—the Phoenix Park informer—on the high seas; also, Monte Carlo Wells (the man who broke the bank), Oscar Wilde, Jabez Balfour, Col. Lynch, Dr. Jameson, Ravachol (the Paris bomb-thrower), and Prince (now in Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum), the murderer of Mr. Terriss, the actor. Numerous other of the principal figures in notorious cases passed through his hands. Soper was the recipient of a presentation gold watch on his retirement, and he has now taken up duties at a well-known London theatre.

Daily Chronicle August 2 1907

—The collected edition which Messrs. Methuen are publishing of the works of Oscar Wilde will be limited to five hundred copies for Great Britain, with a very limited sub-edition on Japanese vellum.

Nation. August 3 1907

ALTHOUGH two or three books upon Oscar Wilde have appeared, none of them can be said to give anything like real estimate of his achievement in literature. It remains to be seen whether "Oscar Wilde: A Literary Appreciation," by Leonard Creswell Ingleby, which Mr. Werner Laurie is to publish this year, will fill the gap. It is in six chapters, treating of The Man, The Modern Playwright, The Romantic Playwright, The Poet, The Writer of Fiction, and The Philosopher of Beauty.

STAGE & CONCERT ROOM.

Oscar Wilde's Play at the Grand.

Next week the Grand Theatre will reopen after having been closed a month for renovation. The occasion will mark the commencement of the autumn season, and a better selection than that of Oscar Wilde's brilliant play, "Lady Windermere's Fan," could not have been made. The presentation will be in the hands of Mr. Monckton Hoffe's excellent company, and thus a successful performance may be assured. The play will be preceded each evening by a one-act farce by Eden Phillpotts, entitled, "A Breezy Morning."

Manchester Evening News 3 Aug 1907

THE THEATRES.

Opening of the Local Season.

On Monday next two of the local theatres, the Royal and the Prince's, will reopen for the season, and will continue to invite their patrons for the next eight months or so. The farce offered to begin with is interesting enough under the circumstances, but better remains behind. For instance, the three weeks' revival of "As You Like It" at the Royal comes immediately after the week of Oscar Wilde's "The Ideal Husband," a work of some interest in itself coming from so clever a writer of satirical comedy.

Manchester City News 3 August 1907

THEATRE ROYAL.

After being closed for two months the Theatre Royal opens its doors on Monday evening next, when Oscar Wilde's "An Ideal Husband" will be presented by a capable cast, Mr. Ernest E. Norris playing Viscount Goring, and Miss Vera Beringer appearing as Mrs. Cheveley.

Manchester Courier 3 August 1907

THEATRES AND MUSIC HALLS.

"CLOSE" SEASON ENDED.

Theatre Royal "An Ideal Husband."
Prince's Theatre "Charley's Aunt."
Victoria Theatre "Proof."
Palace Eugene Stratton.
Hippodrome Fred Karno's "The Belshazzar."
Empire Austin Rudd.
Tivoli Pool's Myriam.
Free Trade Hall Pool's Myriam.

Lovers of the legitimate drama in Manchester will hail with delight the end of the "close season." Next week both the Royal and the Prince's will throw open their doors again. At the Royal Oscar Wilde's clever play, "An Ideal Husband," will be presented by Mr. Ernest E. Norris, who will find in the part of Viscount Goring abundant chances for polished acting. Mr. Norris will be admirably supported, the company including Miss Vera Beringer, in the rôle of Mrs. Cheveley.

August 4. Manchester. HOLIDAY AMUSEMENTS.

Programmes at Manchester and Liverpool Theatres.

With the advent of August Bank Holiday enterprises in the theatrical world takes a new lease of life. During the summer (3) recess alterations and renovations have taken place in many houses, and the play-going public will find their convenience and comfort considered and their taste in dramatic pabulum carefully catered for. To-morrow the Manchester Royal management will present Oscar Wilde's brilliant work, "An Ideal Husband," with Ernest E. Norris and Vera Beringer in the principal parts.

Hull: Eastern Morning News August 5 1907

The summer recess is generally taken advantage of for necessary alterations and renovations. This has been the case at the Grand Theatre, where the renovator has had his turn. To-day the theatre re-opens with the firing of smart epigrams, the season being given a fitting start off with "Lady Windermere's Fan." This is one of the brilliant plays of Oscar Wilde, whose works are just now enjoying a new lease of popularity. Successful performances are assured, inasmuch as the presentation will be in the hands of Mr. Monckton Hoffe's specially selected company. "Lady Windermere's Fan" will be preceded by "A Breezy Morning," a one-act farce by Eden Phillpotts.

Manchester August 6, 1907

THEATRE ROYAL

"AN IDEAL HUSBAND."

For some years it seemed to be thought, or agreed without thinking, that, since Wilde went to the bad, his plays should not be acted. It was the converse side of the case for enjoining the violinists:—

As fiddlers they are bad, but then Consider what they are as men.

Of late the taboo has been lapsing; Mr. Tree has gone back to "A Woman of No Importance"; we have seen "The Importance of Being Earnest" on a bill; Strauss no doubt helped the change by setting "Salome" to music; last night "An Ideal Husband," perhaps the least characteristic of Wilde's five plays, was given at the Theatre Royal. It shows how indolently a man of comic genius may write a comedy and yet not fail. Plot, incident, and, in outline, characters are half-intentioned, half-cribbed, as lastly or hurriedly as anything in Shakespeare or Molière, the arch-cribbers. As mainspring to a play the blackmailing lady who keeps whole catamounts of dark pasts, may, indeed, be received at embassies may, indeed, be junior to the hills—but the world of stormy barne and penny gaffs has no older inhabitants. Then the tangle of the plot is not really disentangled at all; it is exercised; miracles happen whenever Wilde cannot undo one of his knots; A has to know, in order to get things on, that B is hiding in the next room, so B kicks down a chair; C, for the same good end, has to force upon D the physical possession of a brooch, so the brooch becomes convertible, against the nature of brooches, into a bracelet, and the bracelet and D does not, and thus, by hoping improbability upon improbability, the literal fetter that is needed for the lady's arm is called out of the vasty deep. Or take the idleness of the thinking; compare the cutting of the moral difficulty here, when the wife and husband are relieved, not from his past act of profitable baseness, but from the mere fear of its detection, with the facing and solving of the same difficulty by Ibsen in "A Doll's House."

To this heap of stale loans Wilde brings wit and mischief till the old stuff gleams and twinkles with comic lights direct or refracted. In a sense it is all exotic. People wholly English never talked for long together like these of Wilde's. Of course the line of paradox is natural enough; paradox is inevitable in social groups where saltiness of speech is a point of honour and wit is not universal, for paradox is the announcement of a sense of the necessity of brilliancy, with or without the power to achieve it. But the play of mind of Wilde's Londoners of quality is that of English men and women whom a very witty Frenchman or Irishman is coaching, prompting, bridging, and at the same time watching, delicately mocking. Behind the immediate gaiety and irony of their talk, you feel a reserve of irony not given to them but playing upon them and through them on their audience; it comes out in the more obvious epigrams, thrown like little bombs as if to match with their shouted emphasis some assumed dulness and literalness in the hearer's mind; and again it comes out in the reticent gravity with which Chiltern, the public man, the phrasing dullard, is presented, as if Wilde half thought that the public might take him seriously, and, for mischief's sake, would not give them the hint not to do so. The thing is so drenched in comedy that it cannot but keep an audience laughing, as it did last night, but with the laughter there goes some perplexity, and, we fancy, an uneasy sense of something alien to the spectator's blood and of a general blurring of the confines of lawful fun and levity.

Mr. Ernest Norris's company gave us the anatomy of the play, but not quite its complexion. Miss Vera Beringer put some devil and finesse into the adventuress, Mrs. Cheveley, and her voice had range and gusto in the ley, and her scenes of duelling dialogue, and Mr. Norris himself was amusing in Mr. Charles Haycraft's old part of Lord Goring, the wise, beneficent, and all-managing young man who covers discretion with a cloak of forperry, though he was not the somewhat flower-like fop that we imagine Wilde to have meant, and though he slightly forced the comic values of the part by such changes as that of "Ah! Never heard of Canning!" into "Canning! Ah, never met him." The rest were too obviously remembering their lines—and we did not quite get for what they are worth the fruits of Wilde's drastic first-hand observation of the habits of the social stratum represented—a thing rare in our theatre. C. E. M.

THE CONFESSIONS OF A THEORIST.*

Mr. Bernard Shaw's dramatic criticisms which appeared in the *Saturday Review* during the years 1894-1898, and are now reprinted, are even more interesting as a revelation of himself than for the importance of the work they dealt with. Among other things they show us how he has never understood Shakespeare or seen through Ibsen. It is true that extraordinary interest attaches to the period when the English theatre was struggling under the assault of everything that severs Tom Taylor from Mr. Shaw, when Oscar Wilde led the town, when Stevenson and Henley, Traill and Hichens, Mr. Henry James himself, were produced upon the stage, when Burne-Jones was engaged to design the costumes of "King Arthur" at the Lyceum, and Sir Laurence Alma-Tadema staged "Julius Caesar" at Her Majesty's. It was before the days of the Stage Society, Maeterlinck, and the Court Theatre, but it was a tempestuous time, torn and thrilled by Ibsen and Echegaray, and the rise of Mr. Jones and Mr. Pinero, and the battle of the ancients and the Americans with the new taste and the new knowledge. If there was any writer capable of doing justice to this teeming medley it was Mr. Shaw, who flung himself upon it week by week with unflagging liveliness and generosity of his own ideas in the hope of impressing everybody to write and act and manage as he was passionately convinced they ought.

Taken together, and the rest of the *Saturday Review* of the period excluded, Mr. Shaw's criticisms gain immensely. Everybody interested in the stage, especially everybody who did not see the plays as they came out, should read them. Fortunately for the latter class of persons, Mr. Shaw never troubled at the end of the week to retell, in the fashion of most dramatic critics, the twice-told tale of the plot of the play before him, but plunged straight into criticism of its stuff, its construction, its presentation. And as most of the plays worth remembering at all are by this time well known, the reader who did not see them is proportionately better off.

In so doing Mr. Shaw gave himself away, and although this may not have been very apparent when the process was spread over four years, it cannot be missed when compressed into two volumes. For this book exhibits Mr. Shaw as a theorist, a man of a formula, a very Robespierre of the drama. Never was there a man so much under the domination of his own mind. Never did nature play such an odd trick as when she put the fire of literary genius into that inelastic and academic head. Mr. Shaw's formulary treatment almost takes us back to the days when Mlle. Mars felt constrained to cut Victor Hugo's line—

"Vous êtes mon lion, superbe et généreux" and to recite in its place—

"Vous êtes, monseigneur, superbe et généreux," the fallacy in both cases being the same, the desire to reduce life to a satisfying formula. Mlle. Mars' formula was classicism: Mr. Shaw's is progress.

In two lines he gives us his theory of art when he writes of "The Ideal Husband": "It is useless to describe a play which has no thesis: which is, in the purest integrity, a play and nothing else." For a play which does not contain a thesis, something to prick the world on to adopt a new attitude, he has, as Americans put it, no use; and the writer of such may be marked high as a poet, a person of eloquence, wit, power, or delicate intellect, but he will be damned by Mr. Shaw as pessimist, anarchist, and no dramatist, because his work does not strike a blow in the cause of "progress." Now we can see how Mr. Shaw goes wrong over Ibsen and Shakespeare, who occupy the greater part of this book. Shakespeare, who saw life as it was, at close grips with reality, is to him an exquisite poet indeed, but a mountebank of the commonest intelligence, drifting aimlessly on a sea of nebulous pessimism, with no moral end in view; while Ibsen, on the score of his exclusive interest in ethics is welcomed as mightiest among the tragedians. In later moments Mr. Shaw may admit that he has read absent qualities into the great constructor's work and that Ibsen wasted his tremendous technique and penetrating psychology on pathological studies of an essentially provincial character; but the contrast drawn in this long series of brilliant essays admits of no doubt. Mr. Shaw burns with a desire for reality; but he cannot see it except through the opera-glass of a social theory.

This is not to say that Mr. Shaw's criticism is not of exceptional merit. If he applies a false standard to the subject of art he nevertheless applies a standard to the motley works through which he sat or from which he fled that gives as regards their contents astonishingly right results. His experience and taste in music and painting, his acquaintance with men and affairs, his immense knowledge of stage technique, and his enthusiasm for everything genuine in writing and acting combined to give him an interest and an authority in writing on the theatre seldom enjoyed by one man. As instances of his fairness may be cited the encouragement he consistently offered to works uncongenial to his mind, such as Mr. James's "Guy Domville" and "The Matchmaker".

* Dramatic Opinions and Essays. With an Apology by Bernard Shaw, 2 vols. Constable and Co.

by Miss Kingston and Miss Graves. He has, as he says in a preface, his favourites, and warns us not to take weekly estimates for finally considered judgments, but on some points he underestimates the worth of his analysis. No one who pretends to taste in acting should miss his comparison of Duse and Bernhardt. And no one who likes fun will find any more excellent than the fun that Mr. Shaw makes of the late Augustin Daly and the Drury Lane melodrama.

Mr. James Huneker has been allowed, as the price for very badly editing the reprints, to write an unnecessary introduction, and is apparently responsible for the exasperating absence of any index and an outrageous number of misprints.

Irish Times July 30 1907

GAIETY THEATRE ARRANGEMENTS.

Having been closed for the summer vacation, the Gaiety Theatre will open on Monday next for the autumn season, which promises to be highly successful. This will certainly be so if attractive bookings can bring success, for the management of the theatre has completed arrangements for visits to Dublin of some of the most notable plays and players of the day. To commence with there will be three works by Bernard Shaw next week. That in itself in a remarkable announcement, as Irish playgoers have only a slight—at least, on the stage—acquaintance with the work of their compatriot. The plays selected are "Arms and the Man," "How He Lied to Her Husband," and "The Man of Destiny." The latter work has already been played in Dublin, and it was so favourably received that its reappearance will be looked forward to with pleasure. They will be performed by the members of the Players' Club, amongst whom there are many capable artistes. As regards musical comedies, there are many announced—notably, "Miss Hook of Holland," which has had a remarkable run in London. Another very successful piece of a similar kind, "The Dairymaids," will be presented by an Edwardes' company, in which will be included Miss Phyllis Dare, who is assured a cordial reception. Mr. George Edwardes' company will also produce some other of the latest successes at the Gaiety and Daly's Theatres. Among other musical plays announced are such favourites as "The Blue Moon" and "The Lady Slavey." There will also be a revival of some of Oscar Wilde's brilliant plays. During the season the theatre will be visited by such distinguished actors as H. B. Irving, Forbes Robertson and Miss Gertrude Elliott, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, and Madame Sarah Bernhardt. No Gaiety season would be complete without a visit from Mr. Edward Terry, with whom the Dublin public will be heartily glad to renew its acquaintance. There would also be a serious gap if Mr. and Mrs. F. R. Benson were not due in Dublin. Their engagement will be received with satisfaction. The Carl Rosa Opera Company's visit will also give pleasure, and it is gratifying to find they will include some new operas in their list. The Trinity College Dramatic Club is announced to have a short season also. It has been decided that the pantomime this year will be "Red Riding Hood," which will be on a scale in keeping with the traditions of the Gaiety in the matter of pantomimes.

August 2. 1908

Daily Telegraph,

A BOW-STREET GAOLER.

WELL-KNOWN OFFICER RETIRES.

By the retirement of Assistant-Gaoler Soper, after twenty-five years' service in "the force," those who for various reasons have taken an interest in the proceedings at Bow-street Police-court will, henceforward, miss a familiar and ever-kindly face. Soper was one of those men who seemed naturally fitted for the somewhat difficult and trying position to which, in the course of his duty, he found himself committed. Brought up under the tuition in the art of "gaolerdom" by such past-masters in it as Sergeant White and Sergeant Bush, Soper soon proved himself a person well adapted by tact and temper to be entrusted with the management of prisoners convicted or under remand—and only those who have seen the procession of such persons, male and female, and of every description of temperament, who daily crowd the cells of our metropolitan police-courts, know what the task of dealing with them means.

Soper was, above all things, the steadfast friend of juvenile delinquents; but the stout, strongly-built man with the keen, kindly eyes was, on the other hand, a terror to sinners of maturer years. His memory for such never seemed to fail.

More than one magistrate has expressed himself amazed at the accuracy of Soper's recollection. Soper not only never forgot a face, he had a faculty for remembering its associations. Not once (says the *Evening News*) was he proved wrong when the book came into use for verification purposes.

No officer has perhaps had a more remarkable collection of celebrated criminals through his hands than the "memory man."

To realise this one has only to glance at the records of famous criminal dramas for which the court has proved the stage.

The railed enclosure of which Soper was custodian held, for instance, Gallagher, Wilson, Curtin, and Whitehead, the desperate dynamitards who plotted in 1883; O'Donnell, who shot Carey, the Phoenix Park informer, on the high seas; Oscar Wilde and Jabez Balfour. Dr. Jameson and his raiders, at the end of 1895, appeared in a row alongside Soper, who had an exciting tussle with the cheering mob in court, many of whom wanted to shake hands with the prisoners.

Soper's activity on that occasion is immortalised in the files of the illustrated papers, a reference to which shows Soper as a prominent figure in most of the sketches taken in court.

There was another wild scene at Bow-street in 1898, when the manslaughter of a servant named Popejoy was investigated, and the girl's mistress was the subject of hostile demonstrations.

Colonel Lynch, Whitaker Wright, and Monte Carlo Wells, the "man who broke the bank," and incidentally also broke a number of confiding members of the British public, were amongst those with whom Soper came into official contact.

South Wales Daily Post

July 30 1907

GRAND THEATRE, SWANSEA.

"The Importance of being Earnest"—one of the most successful of Oscar Wilde's plays—is being presented by Mr. Monckton Hoffe's Company at the Grand Theatre, and though the proportions of the house were limited on Monday evening, there was no lack of appreciation as regards the reception bestowed. For scintillating dialogue and terse epigram, Oscar Wilde ranks in the forefront, and there is much in the brilliant comedy of "The Importance of being Earnest" that stamps it outright as the work of a master hand, and one begins to realise why many who had all along been hostile to the author as a man and as a writer became Wilde's men heart and soul after having witnessed this piece. It is a play characteristic of the best qualities of Wilde, drawn with fine lines and the touch of genius, and in the hands of Mr. Monckton Hoffe's capable company lacks nothing in the way of effect and expression. Mr. Hoffe himself takes a leading role—that of "Algernon Noncreeff"—which he sustains with every success. He is ably supported allround, and in his revival of an undoubtedly clever play should meet with that measure of popular support to which he is justly entitled. It is preceded by a bright little comedy, "A Breezy Morning."

2 AUGUST, 1907

MORNING LEADER.

BYGONE BOW-ST.

ASSISTANT-GAOLER'S MEMORIES OF THE PAST.

"Datas," of Bow-st., has retired. "Datas" was Assistant-gaoler Soper, who from day to day for many years kept guard over the stream of human wreckage which flowed through the dock at Bow-st. Police-court, and, having a wonderful memory for faces and facts, he became a living book of reference, to which the magistrate often resorted for information as to a prisoner's career.

Soper joined the police force in 1881, and when Bow-st. Police-court was opened he was made dock constable. His reminiscences of criminals who have passed under his official care would make interesting reading, for he has a memory stocked with the details of some of the most notorious incidents in criminal history.

Could Write a Book.

"I could write a book," Soper told a representative of this journal yesterday, "of the people who have passed through my hands and the historic cases which have been tried at Bow-st." Among them he mentioned Gallagher, Wilson, Curtin and Whitehead, who plotted to blow up the Tower of London in 1883, O'Donnell, who murdered Carey, famous as the Phoenix-park informer, Oscar Wilde, Jabez Balfour, Dr. Jameson, Col. Lynch, Monte Carlo Wells, Whitaker Wright, and Prince, the murderer of William Terriss.

These are the more notorious ones, but for years his memory has been storing up records against the old criminals who are frequently in the dock, and garnishing those records with stories rescued from the stream of tragedy and comedy flowing before the magistrate.

Played Two Parts.

When Soper had a youthful offender in the dock he was the fatherly man, comforting to the best of his ability the youngster. When, however, the old sinner came along "Datas" revealed the incriminating secrets of the offender's past.

At his retirement he was publicly thanked for his services and the manner in which he had carried out his duties by Sir Albert de Rutzen, the presiding magistrate. His colleagues gave him a handsome gold watch. He retires on a full pension.

BOW-STREET "DATAS."

GAOLER'S REMARKABLE GIFT OF MEMORY.

A familiar figure has been lost to Bow-street Police Court in the retirement of the dock-officer, Assistant-Gaoler Soper. Soper, who joined the force in 1881, has been the



ASSISTANT-GAOLER SOPER.

[Photo Parks Press Studio.]

dock-constable for nearly twenty-six years. He took the office on the first day the building was opened, and since then has had some of the most notorious criminals of modern times in his care. He was known as the "Datas" of Bow-street, on account of his wonderful memory for faces. He seldom forgot the face of a man or woman he had once seen, no matter what length of time had elapsed. This gift of memory was his special recommendation for the post. Without reference to the records he could tell the magistrate, on the instant, the previous conviction or convictions of a man in the dock, so far back as seven or eight years. To his associates in the inner circle of the court he was known as "Don't Cry." He had a tender regard for small boys in trouble, and habitués often heard him whispering, "Don't cry!" to poor boys within the dock. Soper is one of the officers who got wounded in the "Bloody Sunday" riots in Trafalgar-square. Amongst prisoners he has guarded in the dock were the notorious seven dynamiters of 1883—Callagher, Whitehead, and others—who attempted to blow up the Tower of London and Government buildings. He also had the care of O'Donnell, who was executed at Newgate for the murder of Carey—the Phoenix Park informer—on the high seas; also "Monte Carlo Wells" (the man who broke the bank), Oscar Wilde, Jabez Balfour, Col. Lynch, Dr. Jameson, Ravachol (the Paris bomb-thrower), and Prince (now in Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum), the murderer of Mr. Terriss, the actor. Numerous other of the principal figures in notorious cases passed through his hands. Soper was the recipient of a pension on his retirement, and he has now taken up duties at a well-known London theatre.

Hull News August 2.
1907.

STAGE & CONCERT ROOM.

Oscar Wilde's Play at the Grand.

Next week the Grand Theatre will re-open after having been closed a month for renovation. The occasion will mark the commencement of the autumn season, and a better selection than that of Oscar Wilde's brilliant play, "Lady Windermere's Fan," could not have been made. The presentation will be in the hands of Mr Monckton Hoffe's excellent company, and thus a successful performance may be assured. The play will be preceded each evening by a comic farce by Eden Phillpotts, entitled, "A Breezy Morning."

Jissen Wo 2009-03 HM406ty Library

Sunday Chronicle.

August 4.

Manchester.

HOLIDAY AMUSEMENTS.

Programmes at Manchester and Liverpool Theatres.

With the advent of August Bank Holiday enterprise in the theatrical world takes a new lease of life. During the summer (?) recess alterations and renovations have taken place in many houses, and the play-going public will find their convenience and comfort considered and their taste in dramatic pabulum carefully catered for.

To-morrow the Manchester Royal management will present Oscar Wilde's brilliant work, 'The Importance of Being Earnest' with Ernest E. Norris and Vera Beringer in the principal parts.

Jissen Wor2019-03-10 14:47:11
University Library

Manchester Evening News 3 Aug
1907

THE THEATRES.

Opening of the Local Season.

On Monday next two of the local theatres, the Royal and the Prince's, will reopen for the season, and will continue to invite their patrons for the next eight months or so. The fare offered to begin with is interesting enough under the circumstances, but better remains behind. For instance, the three weeks' revival of "As You Like It" at the Royal comes immediately after the week of Oscar Wilde's "The Ideal Husband," a work of some interest in itself coming from so clever a writer of satirical comedy.

Jissen Wo 2019/03/18/051 Library

Hull: Eastern Morning News
August 5. 1907

The summer recess is generally taken advantage of for necessary alterations and renovations. This has been the case at the Grand Theatre, where the renovator has had his turn. To-day the theatre re-opens with the firing of smart epigrams, the season being given a fitting send-off with "Lady Windermere's Fan." This is one of the brilliant plays of Oscar Wilde, whose works are just now enjoying a new lease of popularity. Successful performances are assured, inasmuch as the presentation will be in the hands of Mr Monckton Hoffe's specially selected company. "Lady Windermere's Fan" will be preceded by "A Breezy Morning," a one-act farce, by Edwin Philpotts.

Jissen Woordenboek in 1400 City Library

Manchester City News 3 August
1907

THEATRE ROYAL.

After being closed for two months the Theatre Royal opens its doors on Monday evening next, when Oscar Wilde's "An Ideal Husband" will be presented by a capable cast, Mr Ernest E. Norris playing Viscount Goring, and Miss Vera Beringer appearing as Mrs. Cheveley.

Daily Chronicle August 2. 1908

—The collected edition which Messrs. Methuen are publishing of the works of Oscar Wilde will be limited to five hundred copies for Great Britain, which is a very limited sub-edition on Japanese vellum.

Jessen Women's University Library

August 3. 1907

company
rôle of Mr

* * *

ALTHOUGH two or three books upon Oscar Wilde have appeared, none of them can be said to give anything like a real estimate of his achievement in literature. It remains to be seen whether "Oscar Wilde: A Literary Appreciation," by Leonard Creswell Ingleby, which Mr. Werner Laurie is to publish this year, will fill the gap. It is in six chapters, treating of The Man, The Modern Playwright, The Poet, The Writer of Fiction, and The Philosopher of Beauty.

THEATRES AND MUSIC HALLS.

"CLOSE" SEASON ENDED.

Theatre Royal	"An Ideal Husband."
Prince's Theatre	"Charley's Aunt."
Victoria Theatre	"Proof."
Palace	Apollo.
Hippodrome	Eugene Stratton.
Empire	Fred Karno's "The Bailiff."
Tivoli	Austin Rudd.
Free Trade Hall	Poole's Myriorama.

Lovers of the legitimate drama in Manchester will hail with delight the end of the "close season." Next week both the Royal and the Prince's will throw open their doors again. At the Royal Oscar Wilde's clever play, "An Ideal Husband," will be presented by Mr. Ernest E. Norris, who will find in the part of Viscount Goring abundant chances for polished acting. Mr. Norris will be admirably supported, the company including Miss Vera Dillingham, in the rôle of Mrs. Cheveley.

"AN IDEAL HUSBAND."

For some years it seemed to be thought, or agreed without thinking, that, since Wilde went to the bad, his plays should not be acted. It was the converse side of the case for encoring the violinists:—

As fiddlers they *are* bad, but then
Consider what they are as men.

Of late the taboo has been lapsing; Mr. Tree has gone back to "A Woman of No Importance"; we have seen "The Importance of Being Earnest" on a bill; Strauss no doubt helped the change by setting "Salome" to music; last night "An Ideal Husband," perhaps the least characteristic of Wilde's five plays, was given at the Theatre Royal. It shows how indolently a man of comic genius may write a comedy and yet not fail. Plot, incident, and, in outline, characters are half-invented, half cribbed, as lazily or hurriedly as anything in Shakspeare or Molière, the arch-cribbers. As mainspring to a play the blackmailing lady who keeps whole catacombs of dark pasts, steals jewels freely, and is received at embassies may, indeed, be junior to the everlasting hills—it depends on the age of the hills,—but the world of stormed barns and penny gaffs has no older inhabitants. Then the tangle of the plot is not really disentangled at all; it is exorcised; miracles happen whenever Wilde cannot undo one of his knots; A has to know, in order to get things on, that B is hiding in the next room, so B kicks down a chair; C, for the same good end, has to force upon D the physical possession of a brooch, so the brooch becomes convertible, against the nature of brooches, into a bracelet, and the bracelet has a secret spring, and C knows the spring and D does not, and thus, by heaping improbability upon improbability, the literal fetter that is needed for the lady's arm is called out of the vasty deep. Or take the idleness of the thinking; compare the cutting of the moral difficulty here, when the wife and husband are relieved, not from his past act of profitable baseness, but from the mere fear of its detection, with the facing and solving of the same difficulty by Ibsen in "A Doll's House."

To this heap of stale loans Wilde brings wit and mischief till the old stuff gleams and twinkles with comic lights direct or refracted. In a sense it is all exotic. People wholly English never talked for long together like these of Wilde's. Of course the line of paradox is natural enough; paradox is inevitable in social groups where saltiness of speech is a point of honour and wit is not universal, for paradox is the announcement of a sense of the necessity of brilliancy, with or without the power to achieve it. But the play of mind of Wilde's Londoners of quality is that of English men and women whom a very witty Frenchman or Irishman is coaching, prompting, briefing, and at the same time watching, delicately mocking. Behind the immediate gaiety and irony of their talk you feel a reserve of irony not given to them but playing upon them and through them on their audience; it comes out in the more obvious epigrams, thrown like little bombs as if to match with their shouted emphasis some assumed dulness and literalness in the hearer's mind; and again it comes out in the reticent gravity with which Chiltern, the public man, the phrasing dullard, is presented, as if Wilde half thought that the public might take him seriously, and, for mischief's sake, would not give them the hint not to do so. The thing is so drenched in comedy that it cannot but keep an audience laughing, as it did last night, but with the laughter there goes some perplexity, and, we fancy, an uneasy sense of something alien to the spectator's blood and of a general blurring of the confines of lawful fun and levity.

Mr. Ernest Norris's company gave us the anatomy of the play, but not quite its complexion. Miss Vera Beringer put some devil and finesse into the adventuress, Mrs. Cheveley, and her voice had range and gusto in the fine scenes of duelling dialogue; and Mr. Norris himself was amusing in Mr. Charles Hawtrey's old part of Lord Goring, the wise, beneficent, and all-managing young man who covers discretion with a cloak of foppery, though he was not the somewhat flower-like fop that we imagine Wilde to have meant, and though he slightly forced the comic values of the part by such changes as that of "Ah! Never heard of Canning," into "Canning! Ah, never met him." The rest were too obviously remembering their lines—this does not mean forgetting parts of them,—and we did not quite get for what they are worth the fruits of Wilde's drastic first-hand observation of the habits of the social stratum represented—a thing rare in our theatre.

delmore; as his wife Miss Mona Hoffe displayed the necessary feminine characteristics associated with an outraged wife. The Duchess of Miss Maud Henderson was a finished study, in which the society lady rather than the woman was always figuring. But the interest was all centred on Mrs. Erlynne (Miss Lydia Busch), who, as a woman with a past, was a most pathetic yet fascinating character. Oscar Wilde's masterpiece is preceded by "Brokers Ahead," an amusing novel by Oswald Brooks.

not uncommon with persistent inaction
which induces them to regard infanticide
with indifference. The imposition of the
capital penalty in this particular example
will at least afford a warning that the of-
fence they treat so lightly may very well
place the halter around their own necks
in case of detection and conviction. Capital
punishment is in principle yearly confronted
with an increasing degree of repugnance
that is marvellous when we recollect the
number of men still living who can remem-
ber witnessing public executions, and that
sixty years ago these latter were regarde

418

419

Manchester Courier

August 6. 1907

THEATRE ROYAL.

OPENING OF THE SEASON.

"AN IDEAL HUSBAND."

By Oscar Wilde.

Sir Robert Chiltern	Mr. Fewlass Llewellyn
The Earl of Caversham, K.G. ..	Mr. Edward S. Petley
Viscount Goring	Mr. Ernest E. Norris
Vicomte de Nanjac	Mr. Harold Wagner
Mr. Montford	Mr. Ben Barnett
Mason	Mr. Edgar Carpenter
Phipps	Mr. R. Palgrave
Harold	Mr. Lionel Russell
Lady Chiltern	Miss Enid Ross
Lady Markby	Miss Bessie Harrison
Mrs. Montford	Miss Carrie Lewis
Miss Mabel Chiltern	Miss Helena Parsons
Mrs. Cheveley	Miss Vera Beringer

Act 1 Sir Robert's House in Grosvenor Square

Act 2 Morning Room in Sir Robert's House

Act 3 Room in Lord Goring's House

Act 4 Same as Act 2

The Action of the Play takes place in 24 hours.

This play was written by Mr. Wilde at the apex of his dramaturgical prosperity and popularity. Opening the spring season of the London Haymarket in 1895, and brilliantly played by a cast which included, if we remember rightly, Charles Hawtrey, Lewis Waller, Maude Millett, Julia Neilson, and Fanny Brough, "An Ideal Husband" was warmly received, on the whole, by the Metropolitan Press and public. An epicure in phraseology, a dealer in rather strained paradoxes and convoluted idiom, the brilliant Irishman flings his witty epigrams about with the reckless prodigality of a man who possesses a Fortunatus' purse of loconioms. He pops verbal comfits into the mouth of his audience with Hibernian lavishness, until one is inclined to up and protest with a paraphrase of the Duke's speech in "Patience," "Epigram in moderation is a capital thing. But epigram for breakfast, epigram for dinner, epigram for tea—to have it supposed you care for nothing but epigram, and that you would consider yourself insulted if anything but epigram were offered to you—how would you like that?" Well, the fashionably-dressed people in "An Ideal Husband" dawdle and loll about the stage, lisping in inverted numbers. The interchange of cynicisms seems like a kind of competition—a sort of new-fangled parlour game. One expects after each tourney of wit that Sir Robert Chiltern will produce a silver matchbox from his coat-tail pocket as a prize for the first gentleman, a manicure set for the first lady, and a bottle of scent for the booby prize. Of course, there is a plot, which one rather laboriously digs out from under a mass of phraseological confetti, but it has little or no grip, and there is really no danger that syncope may supervene from its excitements. For the rest, the story concerns a Foreign Secretary with a past, a loving and trusting wife, a plot, a very fine and large adventuress in a menacing gown of a pea-green hue, a bracelet, a compromising document, and various other old and moth-eaten stage devices, situations, and properties. One may say of "An Ideal Husband"—as, indeed, it may be said of almost all Mr. Wilde's plays—that it is a circus wherein the "cackle overwhelms the 'osses."

On Monday night we thought that the odds were in favour of the melodramatic part of "An Ideal Husband" and against its smartness of dialogue. For, though we should be wrong in contending that the talk had lost the old sparkle and effervescence and "bite" which pleased London twelve years ago, it is still true that the interest of the audience was not securely hooked till the third act, where Mrs. Cheveley is discovered behind the folding doors and Goring reduces her to harmlessness by producing the incriminating bracelet. Dialogue may coruscate or languish, epigrams may hit the bull or miss fire, but the big brush and purple splashes of "Surrey Side" situations will apparently never lose their perennial effectiveness.

"An Ideal Husband" was admirably acted by Mr. Ernest E. Norris's Company. He himself, it may be with justice claimed, proved the very keystone of the acting edifice. As the drawling, listless, yet shrewd and clever Viscount, he sauntered and drawled his way through the piece with humour and point, without apparent effort, and yet scoring all the time. Mr. Norris is a clever, finished actor with a style and manner reminiscent of Mr. Fred Kerr. But with an individuality marked and distinguished. Mr. Norris received admirable support from Miss Vera Beringer as the adventuress. Miss Beringer may not, in all likelihood, have been flamboyant and highly spiced enough for all tastes, but she played her trying part with a flavour of hard callousness eminently suited to what we imagine is Mrs. Cheveley's true character. The way she clipped her words, and, as it were, bit her defiant challenge of Lady Chiltern in the second act is worthy of very high praise. Mr. Fewlass Llewellyn was more than satisfactory as the Under-Secretary. If he suggested that Chiltern's political opponents might embarrass the right honourable gentleman at question time, that is perhaps more the fault of Mr. Wilde's limning than of Mr. Llewellyn's reading. As Lady Chiltern Miss Enid Ross was no whit behind the artists we have named in excellence, and had many admirable moments, while Mr. Edward S. Petley and Miss Bessie Harrison were highly diverting in their respective roles. Miss Helena Parsons proved a bright and pert Mabel, and her acting deserves a word of warm approval.

Manchester Evening News

August 6. 1907

AMUSEMENTS.

THEATRES.

ROYAL.

The autumn theatrical season opened last night at the Royal with a performance of a half-forgotten play of Oscar Wilde's—"An Ideal Husband." There is always an element of risk in the seeing again, after a considerable interval, of a once-enjoyed comedy. The years that the locusts have eaten seem too often to have a depressing effect, and we find ourselves wondering at our former enthusiasm. Some feeling of that sort must have been present last night in the minds of the older playgoers. Oscar Wilde's cleverness is as obvious as ever. His characters pepper each other with epigrams—some smart, some of the copybook order—so continuously as to become almost stupefying and tiresome. But, in spite of the cleverness and wit, some of the old sparkle has fizzled out—and the plot! That we cannot pretend to admire even for old friendship's sake. What once may have seemed bright is now comic in the wrong way. The awful plottings of the utterly bad heroine, the woeful agonies of the silly diplomatist, who has sold State secrets and, wonderful to say, has written letters about his own infamy, the bracelet incident, and the lapses into mere melodrama when virtue and vice, after much preliminary skirmishing, come face to face and have it out, are all there. And we wonder how they can ever have curdled our blood and made our nervous systems quiver. The comedy is excellently played, and the principals are capital. Mr. Norris gives us a really able study of the strong-brained young man who tries to hide his capacity in a drawling and foppish manner. Miss Vera Beringer is an impressive Mrs. Cheveley. We hope that such ladies exist only in the romancer's excited imagination; but Miss Beringer imparts a reality and life-like quality to the character. The principals are competently supported, and the performance seemed to be much enjoyed.

August 6. 1907

August 9

"AN IDEAL HUSBAND."

A Wilde Play at the Theatre Royal.

Oscar Wilde's reputation as a playwright was not made by "An Ideal Husband." He did much better work. But even "An Ideal Husband," bad as it is in many respects, would be considered a very good play indeed in the early 'nineties, before Ibsen taught our dramatists how to hold the mirror up to nature. Wilde's wit and ingenuity were unfailing—if he flogged them sufficiently. But the sparkle has gone from a good deal of the wit, and not a little of the ingenuity suggests that the writer did not flog enough. He was content with threadbare stage devices—the upset chair, the stolen letter, the secret spring of a bracelet, etc., etc., that are intolerable in the light of later methods. "An Ideal Husband" would have been a clever character comedy without these artificial and discredited tricks of the trade. With them it is passable melodrama superimposed on the ancient foundations of screaming farce.

As to the moral, it is that the woman who worships her husband as an ideal, who believes that there is such a thing as a paragon of all the virtues, and, what is more, that she has had the ineffable luck to marry him—is a fool who will be disillusioned some day.

Sir Robert Chiltern, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs (made up rather like "C.B."), is the ideal husband. But he founded a brilliant career on a dishonourable practice, and when the future seems most rosy his past looms up before him. He is given the option of public disgrace or

burying the past with another act of dishonour. He is for saving his face, but his wife's ideal of him forces him to fight. He is rescued from the consequences by a convenient friend, who is able to counter the attack on Chiltern's past by bringing heavy guns to bear on the past of Mrs. Cheveley, a sort of gilt-edged edition of "The Worst Woman in London."

So in the end Chiltern is allowed to climb the giddy heights of fame, secure in the love of a disillusioned wife. Which is all very well, except that no one believes it possible. Lady Chiltern in real life would not be quite so forgiving, for after all the unpardonable offence in a husband is to hide his worst self from an emancipated wife. By far the safer plan is for a husband to avow, however falsely, that in pre-nuptial days he was the greatest scamp unhung. It gives the wife a chance of flattering herself that his improvement is due to her influence.

And then why should Mrs. Cheveley, a born thief and liar, be punished for the sins which she commits as the result of a bad heredity, and Sir Robert, a high-minded man, be allowed to flourish as the result of his sin? But these questions won't trouble the audience. There are several scenes of strong dramatic power, and the play goes merrily in the hands of a clever company. Mr. E. E. Norris as Viscount Goring, the convenient friend (who looks like Mr. Austen Chamberlain, and talks Wilde paradox like G. B. S.), is a decided success, and Miss Vera Beringer as Mrs. Cheveley (naughty woman!) plays with telling art. Mr. Fewlass Llewellyn in the rather lugubrious role of Sir Robert scarcely shows the restraint that is expected from an Under-Secretary, but he makes his points.

designed quite frankly
noise, intentional cacophy
422al terms, the writer
been indicated, refrains
tion of the music, although
given in explanation of th

Hull: Eastern Morning News
August 6. 1907

HULL AMUSEMENTS.

"Lady Windermere's Fan" at the Grand Theatre.

"Lady Windermere's Fan" is a delicate article, richly bejewelled. It sparkles with diamonds of the first water, which, unlike paste, the more closely they are examined—the brighter the light one turns upon them the more brilliant do they appear—the more radiant is their flash. By the use of such metaphors may one attempt to illustrate some of the virtues of Oscar Wilde's brilliant comedy, which has been selected as the play for the opening week of the new season at the Grand Theatre. "Lady Windermere's Fan" is brimful of scintillating epigram and smart dialogue, is delightfully balanced and deliciously conceived. Delicate as it is, however, Wilde is all the time riddling Society, with a big S, through and through, with biting sarcasm. In the neatest possible way he shows that it is, in his own words, "manners before morals" that count within the inner circle. Throughout the play fascinates, and one sits enthralled in the intensity of its grip. Wilde's methods of arresting attention are in themselves worthy of notice, for he gains his ends by the simplest means. "Yes, mama," common words in themselves, yet it is by a repetition of these, and nothing more, that Wilde says more than is many a time said in a volume. The absolute emptiness of society is demonstrated thereby. This, however, is only one instance. There are many of the same order. Of course, it would be impossible to realise all the good things of the author were the play not in such excellent hands as that of Mr Monckton Hoffe's company. Every member of the cast is an artiste. Nothing is allowed to go amiss. Every passage is depicted with perfect taste, and with a naturalness of manner which positively charms. High honours must be accorded to Miss Lydia Busch as Mrs Erlynne, Miss Nona Hoffe as Lady Windermere, Mr Monckton Hoffe as Lord Windermere, Mr H. Lane-Bayliff as Lord Darlington, and Mr Ralph W. Hutton as Lord Augustus Lorton.

Last night's performance was a fitting opening to a most successful season.

Manchester Evening Chronicle
August 8. 1907

"AN IDEAL HUSBAND" AT THE ROYAL.



Sketches by our artist at the Manchester Theatre Royal where Oscar Wilde's well-known play "An Ideal Husband" is presented.

August 9. 1907.

STRAUSS'S "SALOME."

(JOHN LANE. 3s 6d.)

Whatever place among the works of its order it may ultimately take, Richard Strauss's setting of Oscar Wilde's Biblical drama has undoubtedly excited a vast amount of controversy and curiosity. Perhaps one of these days a concert-room version will enable English audiences to become acquainted with the opera. Meanwhile so much is being written about it that music-lovers in this country ought by now to be fairly familiar with the work in many of its aspects. To the general sum of knowledge the guide to the opera, with musical illustrations, which has been written by Mr. Lawrence Gilman, may be said to have added appreciably. His object has been to furnish an outline of the dramatic and musical structure of the work, without entering upon any critical analysis. In the author's own words, the book is designed to serve "as an introduction to one of the most formidable and conspicuous of modern scores," and it lays claim to no "inspired interpretation." By way of clearing the path, Mr. Gilman begins by setting forth the story of Salome, touching upon the earliest sources of the legend and recalling incidentally various works in art and literature which it inspired. With the play itself, as it proceeds in the music-drama he discusses, the writer then deals in considerable detail, and the second part of the book Mr. Gilman devotes to "Salome's" music and its salient characteristics. None who have studied the many criticisms passed upon Strauss's score are likely to doubt the statement that "in harmonic boldness and elaborateness and intricacy of orchestration, it is his most extreme performance," or again, that "his use of dissonance is as persistent as it is nonchalant." Much of it, says Mr. Gilman, is designed quite frankly and obviously as sheer noise, intentional cacophony. But, save in these general terms, the writer of this monograph, as has been indicated, refrains from a critical consideration of the music, although not a few details are given in explanation of the opera's leading motives, which are quoted in the last section of the volume. No doubt these musical fragments will be examined with interest by those who have yet to make acquaintance with the score, even though they fail—as they necessarily must—to give one more than the vaguest idea of the musical texture employed by Strauss. The book is a well-written and elaborate work.

Manchester Evening News
August 10. 1907

"AN IDEAL HUSBAND."

(Royal.)

The author of "Lady Windermere's Fan" was a dramatist of the French school, sparkling, epigrammatical, paradoxical, and witty; but he was not gifted with inventiveness. His creatures, too, belonged more to the puppet-box than to breathing life, and consequently we do not feel disposed to inquire too closely into the moral justice of their fate or the moral purpose of their action. In "An Ideal Husband" the author has simply played with a theme. What will a doting wife do when she suffers disillusion? After a good many smart sayings, awkward complications, and deft extrications, the drama allows us to answer the question, and to answer it, not as human nature suggests, but as mechanical stage arrangements require. It is all intensely artificial and meretricious; and yet it is good too, for it is intellectual. "An Ideal Husband" acts very well, although it dragged somewhat at the opening performance, which seemed to indicate that the actors were tired before they began. The "successful modern play" should, however, enter upon a new period of success with a company so well adapted to the characters, and among whom Mr. Ernest Norris (Viscount Goring), Mr. Fewlass Llewellyn (Sir Robert Chiltern), Miss Enid Ross (Mrs. Cheveley) and Miss Enid Ross (Lady Chiltern), were especially distinguished.

Eastern Morning News (Hull)

Aug. 12. 1907

At the Grand Theatre this week Oscar Wilde's "An Ideal Husband" will be presented. This is not altogether unfamiliar to Hull audiences, who have seen it done by amateurs; but that should only whet the appetite to see it done amid better surroundings. Mr Ernest Norris, whose company it is that will present the play, will play Viscount Goring, and will be supported by Mr Fewlass Llewellyn as Sir Robert Chiltern, and Miss Vera Beringer as Mrs Cheveley.

Jissen W2019-03-18 18:48:17y Library

BEFORE THE FOOTLIGHTS

BRILLIANT PLAY
AT THE "GRAND."

We unhesitatingly and unrestrainedly promise all who visit the Grand Theatre this week an experience of great delight—that is, if they can appreciate verbal sparkle, brilliant wit, and clever acting. Oscar Wilde's play, "An Ideal Husband," affords such a company as Mr Ernest E. Norris has brought together rare opportunities. Last night it was possible to appreciate the play at its height, since it was set forth with a skill and a spontaneousness on the part of all concerned that we are only too glad to recognise.

The ideal husband of the play is a politician—Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs, in fact; and he is his wife's idol—a sweet, unsullied, believing woman she, who makes the mistake so many women make, of placing the men they love on a pinnacle. It is a tremendous blow to Lady Chiltern when she discovers that early in life her husband sold a government secret to a foreign country, and won a fortune of £85,000. The play seems written to warn women against idealising their husbands. In a speech of remarkable power, Sir Robert Chiltern upbraids his wife for her misplaced idolisation of him. Women make the mistake of believing their husbands perfect; men take their wives with their faults, knowing that they possess them. As far as concerns the plot of the story—which to tell the truth is a little melodramatic in structure (for Oscar Wilde at any rate, we have met the Mrs Cheveley sort of adventuress so often before)—as far as the plot is concerned, all comes right in the end. Mrs Cheveley's hold over Sir Robert withers away in face of the hold which one of the characters of the piece proves to have over her.

Mrs Cheveley is the chief personage of the play, since from her springs all the mischief. She is a brilliant society woman from Vienna; a woman with a past; a woman of no scruples—"a genius by day and a beauty at night," some one describes her as being. Miss Vera Beringer is singularly well suited for a part of this kind; she carries it through with an insouciance, a dash, and a recklessness conceived in just the right degree. In admirable contrast is the part of Lady Chiltern, gentle of manner, pure in living, so effectively shown to us by Miss Enid Ross. We do not remember to have seen Miss Ross on the stage before, but she certainly impressed us very favourably last night, as she developed the part of Lady Chiltern.

Mr Fewlass Llewellyn is Sir Robert Chiltern, the man of present-day unimpeachable integrity, and one black spot in the past. Mr Llewellyn gives a life-like impersonation of the politician, and he delivers the many impressive speeches that the author has put in Sir Robert's mouth with decided power. The good angel of the found-out politician is Viscount Goring, whom we meet in the person of Mr Ernest E. Norris. Mr Norris gives us a fine character study of a nobleman whose manner is dull and stolid, but whose mind is alert, and whose heart is warm. Mr Norris's mode of speech is studiously deliberate to the verge of eccentricity, but the audience soon get fond of his idiosyncrasy, and he becomes immensely popular—especially when it falls to his lot to circumvent the adventuress.

Miss Bessie Harrison, as the voluble Lady Markly, has an important role to play, and plays it excellently. Others who do capital work are Mr Edward S. Pelley as the Earl of Caversham, Miss Helen Parsons as Mabel Chiltern, Miss Carrie Lewis as Mrs Montford. The audience followed the play with interest and showed a strong appreciation of its verbal cleverness.

Hull Daily News

August 7, 1907

The Grand Theatre, which this week has witnessed a very praiseworthy revival of Oscar Wilde's brilliant comedy, "Lady Windermere's Fan," will next week witness yet another of the same author's plays, "An Ideal Husband." This latter is not altogether unfamiliar to Hull audiences, who have seen it done by amateurs; but that should only whet the appetite to see it done amid better surroundings. Mr Ernest Norris, whose company it is that will present the play, will play Viscount Goring, and will be supported by Mr Fewless as Lord Gower, Miss Chiltern, and Miss Vera Beringer as Mrs Cheveley.



Era,

August 10. 1907

MANCHESTER.—THEATRE ROYAL.—Lessees, the United Theatres Co., Ltd.; Acting-Manager, Mr. Edmundstone Shirra.—This theatre reopened on Monday with a performance of Oscar Wilde's play *An Ideal Husband* by Mr. Ernest E. Norris and company. A good audience was interested in the development of the story, and considerably amused by the shallow brilliance of the dialogue. Mr. Ernest E. Norris embodied the impossible Viscount Goring with distinct cleverness, and a smart depiction of Mrs. Cheveley was given by Miss Vera Beringer; as Sir Robert Chiltern Mr. Fewlass Llewellyn played with sincerity and power, and Miss Enid Ross presented Lady Chiltern in quite natural and excellent style; the Earl of Caversham was made interesting and amusing by Mr. Edward S. Petley; and others who acted acceptably were Miss Helen Brown, Miss Carrie Lewis, Miss Bessie Harrison, and Mr. Harold Wagner. The play was well put on, and is produced by Mr. Ernest E. Norris.

Jissen W 2649-503 n12301 Library

Eastern morning news (Hull)

Aug. 13. 1907

"AN IDEAL HUSBAND" AT THE GRAND.

For a second week the play-going public of Hull have the opportunity of witnessing another of Oscar Wilde's society plays in the production of "An Ideal Husband," at the Grand Theatre. It is a delightfully intellectual work, which mirrors the brilliance of its author, and if there is little of novelty either in the conception or the characters, the dialogue scintillates throughout. In the opening scene, which depicts a reception at the house of Sir Robert Chiltern, there is a perfect kaleidoscope of society people, whose cynical, satirical, or epigrammatic sayings are refreshingly smart. It is here that we meet with the notorious Mrs Cheveley, the adventuress of the play. She has got into her power Sir Robert Chiltern, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, a man of irreproachable character, in the full tide of political power, and the idol of his wife, who literally worships him as an ideal husband. Her confidence is rudely shaken when she learns that Chiltern as a youth committed the error of giving away a Cabinet secret to a foreign adventurer, thereby laying the foundation of his own fortune. Mrs Cheveley has in her possession an incriminating letter, the revelation of which would bring utter disgrace upon Sir Robert, but who, to save himself, consents for a moment to aid her in a rascally scheme. At his wife's request he countermands his consent, and it is when Lady Chiltern and Mrs Cheveley meet in the former's morning room that the secret which Sir Robert had not dared to impart to his loving and trusting wife is laid bare. The Under-Secretary at that moment enters the room. Lord Goring, Sir Robert's best friend, is also his rescuer from threatened public scandal by the discovery of a bracelet which Mrs Cheveley had possessed herself of as a thief, and he smooths out the way for a conventional happy ending. The play was admirably acted by Mr Ernest E. Norris's company. As the drawling, listless, yet shrewd and clever, Viscount Goring, Mr Norris distinguished himself. He received the greatest support from Miss Vera Beringer, whose personation of Mrs Cheveley was a remarkably fine study. Mr Fewlass Llewellyn was very successful as Sir Robert Chiltern, there being power and ability in his performance, whilst the Lady Chiltern of Miss Eud Ross was a commendable picture of a trusting wife.

GRAND THEATRE: "LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN."

The most popular of the late Oscar Wilde's drawing-room problem plays is 'Lady Windermere's Fan,' which is being revived at the Grand Theatre, Swansea, this week by Mr. Monckton Hoffe's company. In it can be clearly discerned Mr. Wilde's genius for play-writing, which consisted of a delicate handling of intricate and "risky" situations, surrounded and interwoven with a wealth of clever dialogue and brilliant epigram. "Lady Windermere's Fan" is based upon the eternal triangle, though the friend of Lord Windermere in this case turns out to be the unknown mother of Lady Windermere. The development for a time can be anticipated, but the concluding passages of the play, if they are dramatically clever. Mr. Monckton Hoffe

Stage,

August 15, 1907

GRAND (Proprietors, the Hull Grand Theatre Company, Limited; Managing Director, Mr. John Hart; Resident General Manager, Mr. Wynn Miller).—Following upon *Lady Windermere's Fan*, we have another of Oscar Wilde's plays, Mr. Ernest E. Norris's company opening on Monday with *An Ideal Husband*. The play is creditably handled by the members of Mr. Norris's company, and mention should be made of the work of Mr. Fewlass Llewellyn as Sir Robert Chiltern, Mr. E. S. Peile as the Earl of Caversham, Mr. E. E. Norris as Viscount Goring, Miss Enid Ross as Lady Chiltern, and Miss Vera Beringer as Mrs. Cheveley.

Jessen Women's University Library

