

The Last Sensational Drama.

Mr. Oscar Wilde's last literary effort, the drama known as "Lady Windermere's Fan," about which the critics differed so widely on its appearance on the boards in London, has been recently introduced to New York audiences. The author is perhaps one of the most ingenious advertisers that has ever visited this side of the Atlantic. During his former stay in New York he was the observed of all observers in the street, and in the clubs and drawing-rooms. He allowed his hair to grow long, wore knee-breeches, and was wont to express himself in

"Utter platitudes
In stained glass attitudes."

Mr. Wilde is still the apostle of beauty among a certain set in London, who are dubbed by the scoffers as the *chromo-literary-set*, and the discussion about him and his writings have brought about a state of affairs that many an abler man must seek for in vain, and which even money cannot buy. Mr. Wilde is a versatile genius as he has shown by his efforts latterly with brush and pencil, and in other high art attempts. It will not be uninteresting to our readers to have some thorough knowledge of "Lady Windermere's Fan," as it is not among the improbabilities that it may be produced in Montreal in the course of some little time. This drama is a Comedy of manners, supposed to be London manners, and whether Mr. Wilde draws his types from nature or not, he has succeeded in making an amusing play, which falls short of real value only because of an exceedingly improbable plot. The author is a master of epigram.

Whether his paradoxes mean anything or not, they sound exceedingly well, and when enunciated with great care by competent actors it is no wonder that the audience think that there must be something wonderfully deep behind them; it is another illustration of Bunthorne's verse in "Patience" in which he exclaims "If this young man is too deep for me what a very deep young man this deep young man must be."

The actors reel of these paradoxes, bits of epigram and repartee as if they were full of wondrous meaning, and perhaps they are. At the moment they sound amazingly well and the audience is delighted. In "Lady Windermere's Fan" there are but one or two epigrams that now impress me as worth quoting. One of these was the definition of a cynic as some who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing, which is admirable of its kind. Another bit of bright characterisation was that of a woman who was said to have not only a past, but a

dosen of them. This is the sort of thing that makes the audience think that there is a great deal in "Lady Windermere's Fan."

THE IMPOSSIBLE PLOT.

"Lady Windermere's Fan" is so extraordinary a production, from a dramatic point of view, that the story is worth telling. Lord Windermere is a man of wealth and position, who has married a poor girl of unknown parentage. Lady Windermere believes her mother to be dead. She is the daughter of a woman who deserted her husband and child when the latter was still an infant to run away with a lover who proved faithless. The woman had a hard time of it for years and had lost all track of her child. When the play opens Lord Windermere has been approached by the mother of his wife, who declares that she must have help in regaining a position in society. As the price of this help she will keep silence as to the parentage of Lady Windermere. She needs money and social position. Lord Windermere can give her the one and Lady Windermere the other. She promises that if she succeeds in carrying out her plans, which include marriage with a certain idiotic young lord, she will disappear from their world altogether and trouble them no more. She has led rather a wild life of it during the last twenty years and is tired of it.

THE FIRST ABERRATION.

Here begins the absurd part of the play. Instead of telling his wife the true state of affairs, Lord Windermere, in order to shield her from pain, virtually accepts the mother's proposition. He establishes the woman in a handsome house in London, gives her all the money she needs for a luxurious life and prepares to help her social aspirations by introducing her to society at a ball in his own house. Unfortunately for this little scheme, the news of his devotion or apparent devotion to this Mrs. Erylne, who is still a beautiful woman, of course, reaches his wife's ears. Some of her dear friends in society come to condole with her and comfort her over the fact that her husband is supposed to be ruining himself for Mrs. Erylne. The young wife at first refuses to believe the reports; they have been married but three years and her husband has been wholly devoted to her. At least she thinks so.

A PRIVATE CHECK BOOK LEFT OPEN.

But the wife's suspicions having been aroused she began to look around for proof of anything wrong, and as Lord Windermere is careful to leave his private check book where anybody can examine it, she finds that, sure enough, he has been paying thousands of pounds to this woman of very questionable reputation, whose name he has never mentioned to her. Very naturally Lady Windermere is outraged and indignant. She makes a scene with her husband and throws the check

book in his face. If a man had been so idiotic as to begin such an extraordinary piece of folly it is evident that he would now see the idiocy of it and would tell his wife the truth. But Lord Windermere does nothing of the kind. He not only refuses to say why he lavishes large sums of money upon a woman his wife does not know but he insists that Mrs. Erylne shall be invited to a great ball the Windermeres are to give. There is too much for Lady Windermere who refuses point blank to send the invitation, whereupon the husband decides to send it himself, notwithstanding that Lady Windermere threatens to make a scandal should Mrs. Erylne appear, and to break in her face a certain costly fan that she has just received as a birthday present from her husband.

A FATUOUS CHARACTER.

Lord Windermere is an incomprehensible person to the end. He not only brings Mrs. Erylne to his wife's ball, but introduces her to lots of people who promptly turn upon her a cold shoulder, but pays devoted attention to her himself. Lady Windermere is so overcome with rage and mortification that she has not the courage to carry out her threat. She makes up her mind to revenge herself in another way. There is a certain titled rascal, Lord Darlington, who has been persecuting her for some months with his attentions, and telling her how devoted her husband is to Mrs. Erylne. Darlington hopes to profit when the explosion comes, and seeing that his scheme is ripe, he invites Lady Windermere to fly with him for the Continent. At this point Lady Windermere shows that her husband has no monopoly so far as extraordinary behaviour goes, for she listens quietly to the proposal and although she rejects it at first is evidently inclined to think it over. She watches her husband during the evening, and at last comes to the conclusion that the town talk has done him no injustice. He has evidently ceased to love her, and is entirely under the control of this woman. Lady Windermere resolves upon her revenge: she will accept Darlington's offer and she writes a hurried note to her husband telling him that she has left England with his friend Lord Darlington.

WOMEN HIDE AND MEN TALK.

This is no more than Windermere deserves. Mrs. Erylne happens to find the letters left by Lady Windermere and opens it. She resolves to save her daughter if she can and hurries after her to Darlington's house. She finds her there, and without telling her who she is convinces her of the enormity of the step she has taken and induces her to return home. But before the women can escape, a party of men, including Darlington, Windermere, Lord Loftus, the young noodle whom Mrs. Erylne wishes to marry,