

sidered from a high critical standpoint, it will, as Mercutio says, "serve"—serve, that is, to inoculate the rising generation with a respect for our mighty dramatist, whose immortal lines will not suffer even the most inadequate delivery to render them ineffective. That in the present Lyceum acting-text many of those lines have been excised is pardonable, and in some instances necessary, but that whole scenes have been expunged cannot be forgiven, since their absence destroys the unity and significance of the drama as a whole. Shakespeare has certainly drawn an exquisite Love-picture in his delineation of Romeo and Juliet's ill-fated attachment, but he has taken care to provide a grand moral frame for that picture by fitting it into the historical enmity of the houses of Montague and Capulet. In excising therefore the great closing scene, wherein our author has exhibited the reconciliation of the Heads of these Houses over the lifeless bodies of their only children, Mr. Forbes Robertson has not only violated the great moral of the Piece, but, what in Shakespeare's eyes would even have been far worse, has upset the dramatic equilibrium of it, since, as it is made to open with the public quarrel of the two families, and as that quarrel is the key-note preserved throughout, so it is intentionally and emphatically made to close with their reconciliation. Sir Henry Irving—though he was betrayed into other errors in his Production—at any rate escaped from this one, and wisely brought down his curtain as his author intended him to do. Apart, moreover, from this consideration, Mr. Forbes Robertson has unluckily allowed his scenic artist to run very wide of the mark in his depiction of the Tomb of the Capulets, "that vault to whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in . . . where for this many hundred years the bones of all her buried ancestors are packed" is now portrayed on the Lyceum stage as a seemingly well ventilated mortuary, where Juliet lies alone upon her bier!—a place where it would be ridiculous to suppose that one would "die strangled ere her Romeo comes." Juliet's description, be it remembered, was no imaginary one, inasmuch as she refers in it *totidem verbis* to Tybalt's corse "yet but green in earth," and as she had no doubt just seen the interior of the monument itself on the occasion of Tybalt's funeral. Can the scene also be said to be appropriately depicted, when it forces Paris to encounter Romeo at the back of the stage behind a screen of open iron-work, and makes Romeo's forcible entrance into the tomb a mere farce in the distance? The church-yard too, which prominently figures in the Shakespearian text, is well-nigh left to the imagination of the spectators, and the touching and striking passages in which Paris instructs his page, and Romeo takes leave of his serving-man are *ex necessitate* omitted through the absurd scenic arrangements!

Independently, too, of these cardinal violations of the object and purpose of the drama, there are others of hardly less importance, which a single-minded Shakespearian critic must feel that he is bound to indicate. The omission of the scene in which the Nurse discovers that Juliet is motionless, and raises an alarm, believing her to be dead, is an omission scarcely less culpable, both from a Shakespearian and dramatic point of view, than is that of those we have above noted, and this cannot fail to be observed by those who recollect how much Sir Henry Irving made of it. Even he, however, had not the courage or the percep-

tion to let the comic interlude of the musicians stand—an interlude which Shakespeare admirably introduces, *de more suo*, to act both as a relief and a foil to the preceding tragedy. We had hoped that the New Management at "The Lyceum" would have displayed more dramatic insight, and broader and more enlightened views of what our supreme dramatist demands for his adequate interpretation. As it is, we are deeply sorry to say that Mr. Forbes Robertson runs a serious risk of being added to the melancholy list of Actor-managers, who have made use of Shakespeare, rather for the purpose of individual glorification, than of artistic, sympathetic, and intellectual rendering!

E. G. H.

DRAMATIC NOTE.—The considerable space which we have devoted to the critique from our distinguished contributor upon "Romeo and Juliet" at "The Lyceum" precludes us, this week, from giving a notice from the same pen of a very attractive and well-played drama, entitled "Her Advocate," just brought out at the Duke of York's—late the Trafalgar—Theatre. We hope, however, to give the latter notice next week, and, as a Nurse figures as the heroine in the drama referred to, we do not doubt that it will prove interesting to a large portion of our readers.

A Book of the Week.

THE NEW STANLEY WEYMAN.*

It is pleasant to be able to say that the "New Stanley Weyman" is a decided success. The separate short stories which make up the volume are fictionally alleged to have been discovered in the memoirs of Duc de Sully, the favoured minister of Henri Quatre of France, and the personality of the minister runs through all these stories, which record various episodes, adventures, and escapades in the life of the minister and the sovereign that he so ardently served and adored. It is impossible to read these memoirs without recalling the fictional histories of the famous Alexandre Dumas, for the headlong escapes and quaint jests that the great French novelist relates have made the history of the time of Henri of Navarre alive to all appreciators of those delectable romances.

I am not going to say that I think that Stanley Weyman is equal to Dumas as a novelist, but I do think that he has something of the same charm, and that some of the mantle of his great French predecessor has fallen upon him, for he is a craftsman in the art of presenting his stories and commencing the relation of an adventure, so that almost as soon as we have begun to read one of his tales we find ourselves on the tip-toe of expectation about what is going to happen, and are filled with a delightful curiosity to hear the end of the adventure.

Mr. Stanley Weyman has, moreover, a certain carefully cultivated, yet quaint style of his own which is extremely pleasing. For instance, let us take the opening of one of the tales entitled "The Open Shutter," as a very good example of the craft with which he contrives to seize upon our attention, as well as a pattern of his rather peculiar method of workmanship.

* From the "Memoirs of a Minister of France," by Stanley Weyman. 6s. (Cassell & Co., 1895.)

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