

Mrs. Bamford Slack, in dealing with the objection sometimes raised that women would lose their delicacy if they entered the political arena, asked if anyone could prove that the vote had been a source of moral degradation to men. She believed that women would ennoble it and dignify it, and, by possessing it, raise the nation to a higher level than it had at present attained. In reply to Sir William Harcourt's objection that they were face to face with manhood's suffrage, and that the franchise, if granted to women at all, would involve womanhood's suffrage, and petticoat government, and that he took his stand amongst the opponents on the "firm basis of the numerical argument," she replied, "let justice be done, though the heavens fall," and "it is never wrong to do right."

Mrs. Reeves, from New Zealand, charmed the audience by her vivid description of the way in which the battle of the enfranchisement of women had been fought and won in that country.

One lady present was bold enough to announce as her opinion that the time for the enfranchisement of women had not yet arrived, after which Mrs. Brownlow spoke upon the industrial aspect of the question.

A vote of thanks to Lady Grove for presiding, and to Mrs. Roberts-Austin for convening the meeting, was proposed by Mrs. Russell Cooke, and seconded by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick.

Lady Grove in replying, expressed her opinion that any women who had worked for the Parliamentary interests of men who were opposed to Women's Suffrage were fools, which sentiment was heartily applauded as the proceedings concluded.

The meeting was numerously attended, and lively discussions ensued on the suffrage, and other questions of interest to women, to the timely tinkle of the tea-cup.

Dramatic Notes.

'AS YOU LIKE IT' AT THE ST. JAMES'S.

THE recent withdrawal of "As You Like It" from the Boards of the St. James's Theatre suggests to the Shakespearian critic some reflections of a not very satisfactory kind. It is painful to find that, at a period when the works of our immortal dramatist are perhaps more than ever admired, appreciated, and studied, it seems so difficult to produce any one of them upon the stage in a manner, which corresponds with the expectations of those, who have endeavoured to grasp their beauty and significance. It is equally painful to observe that the rising generation of auditors, whose Shakespearian studies ought to be enlarged and refined by the light thrown upon them by living illustrations, should be rather misled than advanced by the performances of the "walking shadows, the poor players," who so often do duty for veritable embodiments. Bad enough is it to see Shakespeare himself cut about and mangled, in order to suit the supposed requirements of time, stage business and scenery, or the personal vanity or caprices of his exponents, but almost worse is it to discover that his text, even as left for delivery, should be enunciated in so slovenly, unintelligent, and ineffective a way as to convey but very little of its depth and meaning, its force and subtlety, its wit and humour, its grandeur and pathos to the ears of what ought to be a rapt audience!

Mr. George Alexander and his Company may have succeeded in pleasing the eyes and "tickling the ears of the groundlings," and by so doing may have managed to run their Piece for more than one hundred nights, but they must not suppose that they have afforded to the public an opportunity of witnessing another supreme Presentment of one of the finest comedies of the dramatist of all time. To begin with, the impersonation of Orlando himself was of the tamest description—Mr. Alexander for example not taking anything like the advantage he ought to have done of the exquisite speech to the Princesses when they tried to dissuade him from the wrestling, nor exhibiting the requisite intensity of feeling when he hangs upon the trees the love-verses to "the unexpressive she"! True, Orlando is portrayed designedly as almost a foil for the wit of Rosalind, but nevertheless he possesses an innate nobility of his own which Mr. Alexander failed to bring out.

As Rosalind, Miss Julia Neilson began tolerably well, but speedily degenerated into an occasional whine utterly at variance with the dignity and high spirit of the Princess, and to this was added so serious a loss of grace in speech and deportment when she assumed the guise of a "man," that her embodiment in male attire frequently verged on the burlesque! She spoilt in fact her person as well as her Part, and instead of heightening her charms, like Jessica, by putting on "the lovely garnish of a boy," she became, like Slender's *mistaken* Anne Page, "a great lubberly boy" herself! The only really good thing which she did in the play was the singing of "The Cuckoo Song," which, as all Shakespearians must at once have recognised, was intruded into it, and that without any *raison d'être* whatever! As Rosalind, indeed, Miss Julia Neilson fell far below the good work she has done in Hypatia and other characters, and, though she may deserve to follow in the wake of more than one inadequate exponent of the Part, whom we have seen on the same Boards in recent years, yet she falls immeasurably below, not merely the high standard set up by the famous Helen Faucit, but the fairly conspicuous one left by Ada Rehan.

As the melancholy Jaques, Mr. W. H. Vernon missed his mark, not so much by his own fault as by that of the stage-manager—his celebrated "Seven Ages Speech" being directed rather to the audience in the theatre than to that on the stage by reason of his forward position, and his description of himself—one of the most striking passages in the piece—being dragged out of the place to which its author has assigned it, and thus being rendered not only useless in itself, but a mischievous instrument for excising an excellent scene! As Touchstone Mr. E. V. Esmond acquitted himself very creditably—albeit somewhat lacking in strength of portraiture, particularly in the well-known passage where he drives out Audrey's *quondam* suitor, William. Mr. H. B. Irving did all that could be done with Oliver, and displayed a commendable modesty in taking the Part. As Le Beau, Mr. Vincent Sternroyd unfortunately quite mistook his author's intention, since Shakespeare has sketched this character as a courtly and genial gentleman, and by no means as a fop, like Osric in Hamlet, which Mr. V. Sternroyd made him, and this, so far as we are aware, has been traditionally recognised on the stage. Of most of the other impersonations, and especially of those of the usurping Duke, and of Adam, the less said the better,

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