

* STAGELAND. *

By Hector Charlesworth.

THE advent of Mr. Willard, after three years' absence in England, has been one of the refreshing events of the present season. Mr. Willard, who in his particular field—that of the modern prose drama, is one of the greatest actors in the world—always has something new and interesting to engage our attention. This year he presented Henry Arthur Jones' comedy, 'The Rogue's Comedy,' which was his chief offering. In this work Mr. Jones parted with his own moral temperament for the nonce, and made no attempt to deal with the serious issues of the day. He proved that his desire to improve the race with his philosophy of life has been the principle cause of the technical defects in all his other works. 'The Rogue's Comedy' was perfect in its development, and savored of Moliere in its witty unctuous relation of the adventures of a rogue who preys upon society. Mr. Willard was perfect in his aplomb in the mocking fashion in which he cheated and laughed at his gulls, and in the genuine heartiness of his acting. He introduced to us an actress of unusual skill in the person of Miss Olga Brandon, a woman capable of expressing a character not by spouted phrases, but sheer expressive pantomime. Miss Brandon is an American girl who has gained a real position on the English stage.

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It may be somewhat illuminative of present theatrical conditions to look over the season's record of Augustin Daly, the most ambitious of American managers. The following is a list of the productions at his theatre in New York:—'The Tempest,' nineteen times; 'Much Ado About Nothing,' thirty four times; 'As You Like It,' five times; 'The Wonder,' eight times; 'The School for Scandal,' four times; 'London Assurance,' eight times; 'The Magistrate,' twenty-three times; 'Meg Merrilies,' seven times; 'The Geisha,' 161 times.

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It will be seen that the performances of 'The Geisha' outnumbered all the other productions put together. The Japanese comedy was produced 161 times against 108 productions of legitimate comedy. It must be taken into consideration that not one of the legitimate pieces was new to theatre-goers, and therefore appealed only to that portion of the public which is interested in Shakespeare and in old English comedy. 'The Geisha,' on the contrary, was absolutely new to the public, and appealed with great success to all classes of the community. Everything considered—fifty-eight Shakespearean performances in one New York theatre is not a bad showing. Mr. Daly's usual custom of giving one Shakespearean revival was extended by two new productions, 'The Tempest' and 'Much Ado About Nothing.' The latter was manifestly for the purpose of allowing Miss Ada Rehan to act the role of Beatrice, while 'The Tempest,' like 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' was produced not for the acting roles it contains, but to show Mr. Daly's resourcefulness as a stage manager. There are not many actresses of the day who study and act five new roles in a season, yet Miss Rehan has done so, her essays consisting of Beatrice and Miranda in 'The Tempest'; Lady Gay Spanker in Dion Boircault's 'London Assurance'; Donna Violante in the old

comedy, 'The Wonder'; and the classic gypsy hag, Meg Merrilies. Mr. Daly's idea seems to be that of running something meretricious and unimportant, like 'The Geisha,' for the purpose of making money to be expended on productions of an artistic and literary character. Therefore no one has any right to complain because some of the productions in his theatre are not worthy of its noble traditions.

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Altogether New York has shown a reaction in favor of the literary drama this season. Lorimer Stoddard's much talked of dramatization of 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' was frankly literary in character and a reverent reproduction of the original. Its great success is one of the best signs of



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the times. Hardy's noble, healthful and poetic masterpiece seemed almost too fine in its motives to be adequately presented in a bold theatric frame, yet Stoddard has succeeded, and the spirit of his work has met with public approbation that cannot be gainsaid. Allusion was made last month to Julia Maylowe's new play. Very seldom does she essay anything new. Her preference has always been for standard poetic works of a tested character. In this Scotch love drama, however, adapted by J. I. C. Clarke from 'Les Jacobites,' by Francois Coppee, she has a real piece of literature which gives her the opportunity she desires. In English it bears the very insipid title, 'For Bonnie Prince Charlie.' In the original it follows the conventional form of the French poetic drama, and was written in Alexandrines. The historical

basis of the piece was the final misfortunes of the Stuarts in the Scottish rising of 1745. The heroic background of the Jacobite rebellion gives rare dramatic force to the piece, and throws into relief the poetic qualities of Miss Marlowe in the role of a beggar maid who is instrumental in effecting the escape of the young Pretender.

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Two dramas by a charming and poetic English writer, Louis N. Parker, have been among the real theatrical successes of the year. 'Rosemary,' a tale of life, and of life's memories, has been acted by John Drew with immense success. Another play of his, 'The Mayflower,' which discerning critics have pronounced a work that will live, has been very popular, even in the hands of the drawing-room company of Daniel Frohman's Lyceum. It is said that there is a great future for this drama of the pilgrims, when some day in the future it becomes part of the poetic repertoire of some great artist. In spite of the withering effect of the burlesque and vaudeville which have been so prevalent on the stage of late, some really beautiful works have thrust their heads above ground, and bloomed as bravely as crocuses in March.

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London's dramatic season actually begins just when America's season is closing. For the edification of the English public there are this spring two brilliant essays in the direction of the philosophic drama by the two eminent and ambitious playwrights, A. W. Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones. Both dramatists have been thinking upon the problems of love in middle age. Mr. Pinero writes of love at forty-five, and Mr. Jones of love at fifty. The brilliant dramatic critic of the *Saturday Review*, George Bernard Shaw, has been mischievous enough to look up their biographies, and finds that Mr. Pinero is above forty-five, and Mr. Jones is verging on fifty. Mr. Jones has depicted a great London physician, who, after a lifetime devoted to science, falls in love with a pretty young girl who drops in to consult him about the health of her fiancé. He follows her down to the apple orchards and peaceful methods of her home. She is the daughter of a clergyman, and her fiancé is a young temperance lecturer and religionist who is secretly a slave of alcohol. The great doctor becomes possessed of the secret, and the problem lies before him of whether he shall play the tattler, and reveal the true state of affairs to the girl he loves; or whether he shall let this girl unwittingly embark upon lifelong unhappiness with the hypocrite whom she loves. Ultimately events relieve

the physician of the necessity of either repugnant act, and he wins a young bride. The piece is poetically and philosophically done. Mr. Willard will be seen in the piece in Toronto next season.

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Mr. Pinero's drama is entitled, 'The Princess and the Butterfly,' with the sub-title of 'The Fantastics,' and is the same combination of cynicism, poetry, wit and triviality that 'The Amazons' was.

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The picture which appears on this page is that of Mrs. E. G. M. Shipman, formerly Miss Effie Elaine Hext. Mrs. Shipman is a charming young elocutionist, whose home is in Colorado Springs. She is at present touring in California. Her husband is the able manager of the famous Johnson-Sully combination.