



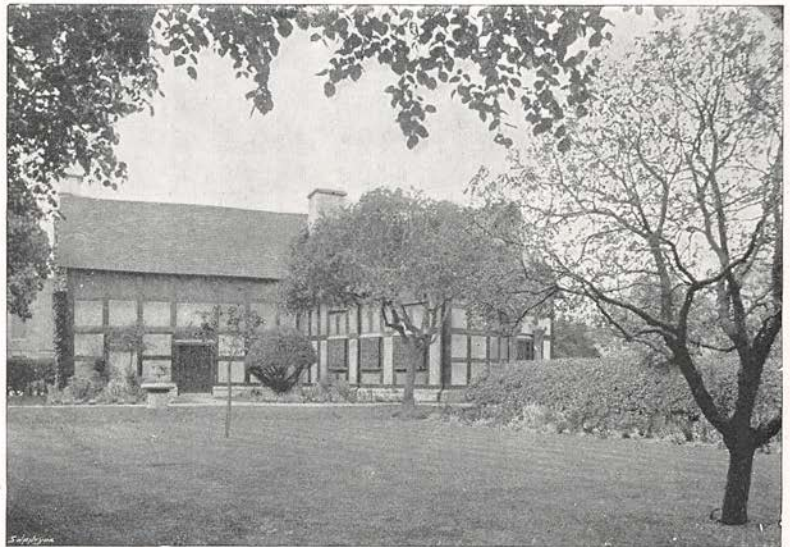
A MOONLIGHT VIEW OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY, STRATFORD-ON-AVON, WHERE SHAKESPEARE IS BURIED.

THE SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL: ITS ORIGIN AND HISTORY.

which still retains a very touching old-world grace, despite bygone vandalism and more recent but scarcely less deplorable "improvement." It is to see William Shakespeare's plays performed in William Shakespeare's native place, with all the added interest of allusion to local scenes and colouring that has been read into

IN these days of ciphers and rumours of ciphers, when fresh onset is constantly being made upon the personal credit of the man Shakespeare and his long-reputed authorship of the great poetic heritage that bears his name, it is significant of the attitude of a great number of students and playgoers who, to use the words of rare Ben Jonson, "do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any," that the Memorial Council, acting as the official custodian of the poet's memory in his native town of Stratford-on-Avon, finds itself justified in extending the annual Shakespeare Festival over a period of three weeks, in place of the fortnight of recent years and the mere week of the Commemoration's earlier custom. For there is always a note of very personal homage in this yearly Festival at the little town,

in the course of some three centuries, that most of the visitors from a distance assemble, and not only to see the plays, but to make or renew the payment of their homage at each haunt associated by tradition with the promise of the poet's ardent youth or the calm seclusion of his latter years, or identified in local colour with some passage in his work. Then there is the personal note,

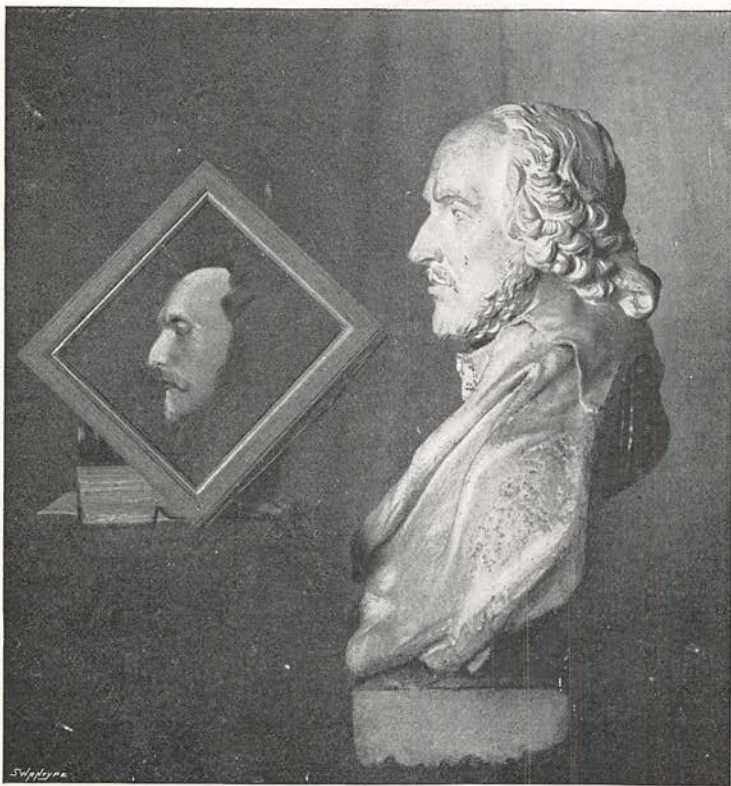


THE GARDEN FRONTAGE OF THE HOUSE IN WHICH SHAKESPEARE WAS BORN.

Two photographs by Mrs. Catharine Weed Ward; reproduced from "Shakespeare's Town and Times"

again, in the ceremony of bearing garlands to his grimly epitaphed tomb on that day "of all days i' the year" most closely associated with his name—April 23rd, the day of England's patron Saint George and his rose, and the reputed birthday and deathday as well of her great national poet.

And yet, perhaps, it were to consider too curiously if one should seek to assess the precise proportions in which personal homage or literary enthusiasm animates the majority of Stratford Festival-goers.



THE "DAVENANT" BUST AND COPY OF THE REPUTED DEATH-MASK OF SHAKESPEARE.

Photograph by Mrs. Catharine Weed Ward; reproduced from "Shakespeare's Town and Times."

For the first argument that rises to the lips is that Shakespeare's plays, if regarded as a literature compiled by another master-mind, can be witnessed elsewhere, but the special acts of commemoration can only be part of some such organised movement as this annual Festival. Yet this is soon found to be fallacious, owing to the infrequency of Shakespearian performances on the English stage, save in the *répertoire* theatre provided by Mr. F. R. Benson's well known company—

and at this point of any such consideration one is brought post-haste back to Stratford's Festival. No praise can be too great for Mr. Benson's strenuous devotion to the Shakespearian drama, yet even he, with his splendid capacity for undertaking what to all others of his craft has seemed a forlorn hope, could never, I take it, have ventured on the production of so many plays long banished from the boards, had he not found his "first-night" occasion and inspiration in the Festival audiences.

But whatever the exact motive power that has brought and brings these visitors to the Shakespeare Festival, not only from London and all parts of the United Kingdom, but even from Germany and America, it suffices that their yearly increasing numbers are giving to this series of performances far more than a local importance. Indeed, it would almost seem that the day is not far distant when the little town in the heart of the Garden of England will range with Bayreuth and Oberammergau in the minds of the cosmopolitan, and draw them to its yearly Festival as potently as either of those other strongholds of a somewhat similar ideal.

That the growth of the Festival has been gradual, and even, until within the last few years, slow, speaks all the more hopefully for the permanence of its recent development. The first recorded celebration of Shakespeare's memory in his native place, as distinct from the ordinary performance of his more popular plays by strolling players—among whom are known to have been both Peg Woffington and Roger Kemble, the father of the famous Mrs. Siddons—was a performance of "Othello" given by a touring manager of some repute named John Ward in 1748, for the raising of funds

to repair Shakespeare's monument in the famous Church of the Holy Trinity.

The performance realised seventeen pounds—not a bad sum for those days—and the occasion has been handed down to the present time by a curiously direct memento in the form of a pair of buckskin gloves which are believed to have belonged originally to Shakespeare. They were presented, as such, in recognition of the performance, to the actor, John Ward, by Shakespeare Hart. Ward subsequently gave them to David Garrick, from whom they passed to Mrs. Siddons, and through her to Fanny Kemble, who presented

them to Dr. Horace Howard Furness, the well known American authority on Shakespeariana.



THE PICTURE GALLERY OF SHAKESPEARIAN PAINTINGS AND PORTRAITS, MEMORIAL BUILDINGS.



THE SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL THEATRE AND LIBRARY, STRATFORD-ON-AVON.

Two photographs by Mrs. Catharine Weed Ward; reproduced from "Shakespeare's Town and Times."



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[Chancellor, Dublin.

MR. AND MRS. F. R. BENSON AS HENRY THE FIFTH AND KATHARINE OF FRANCE.

The first Shakespearian Commemoration of any organised importance was a "Jubilee" promoted by Garrick, in 1769. This was in its way a very brilliant affair, but concerned itself less with the actual plays of Shakespeare than afterwards became the custom, banquets, balls, and even horse-racing forming a staple part of its programme.

The opening of a regular theatre in 1827 led to the visiting of Stratford by many well graced players. Hither came the

Keans, father and son, Macready, Dillon, Mrs. Nisbett, and others who made the theatrical history of their day. The more popular of Shakespeare's plays were given from time to time by these and less distinguished actors, but after a time the theatre fell on evil days, and at last, in 1872, was bought by Mr. Halliwell-Phillips and pulled down, amid general approval, in order that the ground which it now cumbered to no sufficient purpose might be restored to its

former state as part of the garden belonging to New Place, the home Shakespeare built for his old age.

In the course of these ordinary professional performances there were held two Festivals—one in 1827 and the other in 1830—which were intended to inaugurate a series to be held once every three years, but the scheme fell through after the second celebration. Thereafter all Commemoration ceremonies fell into abeyance until 1864, when the tercentenary of the poet's birth was celebrated by a series of performances of his plays, in which Buckstone, Compton, Creswick, and Sothern took part. It was the great success of this Festival,



MR. AND MRS.
F. R. BENSON AS RICHARD THE
SECOND AND HIS QUEEN.

Photographs by Davis, Lancaster.

which was held in a temporary building erected for the purpose, that inspired local enthusiasts with a wish for a more permanent headquarters for future celebrations. At length, in 1879, thanks in

great measure to the princely generosity of the late Mr. Charles Flower, this desire was fulfilled by the opening of the handsome Memorial Theatre, which with its fine library and picture gallery, devoted to the preservation of literary and pictorial Shakespeariana, and its spacious gardens on the bank of the Avon, has in the years that have passed become a very real and valuable headquarters of Shakespearian study. In this theatre, Shakespeare's Day, April 23rd, and a varying number of preceding or ensuing days, have for the last twenty-two years seen the presentment of a number of the poet's plays, and each year has added to this list

the Benedick of Barry Sullivan. "Hamlet," "As You Like It," and other plays were also included in the programme of this first of the modern Festivals. In the following year



Photo by]

[Kilpatrick, Belfast.

MR. GEORGE R. WEIR AS BOTTOM THE WEAVER.

"*Methought I was—and methought I had.*"

at least one play not previously performed there.

The opening production was "Much Ado About Nothing," in which Lady Martin, the famous Helen Faucit of earlier days, emerged from her retirement and played Beatrice to



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[Davis, Lancaster.

MR. FRANK RODNEY AS BOLINGBROKE, AFTERWARDS HENRY IV.

the Memorial Council again availed themselves of Barry Sullivan's experience for the conduct of the revivals, and then for two years Mr. Edward Compton, whose distinguished father had contributed much to the success of the 1864 Celebration, was entrusted with the artistic control of a programme which included "Twelfth Night," "Romeo and Juliet," and "The Comedy of Errors" as chief novelties. In 1883, Mr. Elliot Galer, an Englishman chiefly associated as actor with the American stage, added "Macbeth," "Henry IV., Part I.," and "King Lear" to the list of the Memorial productions, and in the following two years Miss Alleyne



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[Window & Grove, Baker Street, W.

MISS ELLEN TERRY IN QUEEN KATHARINE'S DYING VISION IN "HENRY VIII."

contributed "Cymbeline," "Measure for Measure," and "Love's Labour Lost."

The list of productions already wears an important air, but it must be admitted that they had so far been leavened with sundry modern plays that were in no sense worthy of the occasion. The real fact probably was that the affair still remained for the most part a local one, and local audiences were

not large enough to support several performances of one play. In 1886 the control of the theatrical arrangements was for the first time entrusted by the Memorial Council to Mr. F. R. Benson, who had not long before organised his now famous Shakespearian Repertoire Company. Since then Mr. Benson has been responsible for no fewer than thirteen Festivals, the ap-



Photo by]

[Window & Grove, Baker Street, W.

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS QUEEN KATHARINE IN "HENRY VIII."

proaching three weeks' programme which begins on April 14th being his fourteenth of the kind. There have been two intervals in his period of control. In 1889-90 the performances were given by the late Osmond Tearle, a fine actor of heroic parts, who somehow missed, as manager, the larger position he merited as individual player. Mr. Tearle is remembered in connection with the Stratford Festival for his very spirited revivals of "Henry VI., Part I.," "King John," and "The Two Gentlemen of Verona." In 1885, again, after four successive annual appearances of the Benson Company, Mr. Ben Greet was invited to give the series of plays for the year, and his special revival of "A Winter's Tale," with

Mr. H. B. Irving, Miss Beatrice Lamb, Miss Dorothea Baird, and Miss Louie Freear in the cast, proved a worthy addition to the Memorial productions.

That the more continuous policy made possible by a single directorate has made for solid development in these celebrations, the results have amply testified. Apart from the fact that Mr. Benson's very considerable following in London and the big provincial centres of his circuit sends many visitors to Stratford every spring, there is the all-important consideration that only the Benson Company can possibly give good performances of twelve different plays of Shakespeare in as many nights — and the audiences, composed of visitors who want to go to the theatre every evening, want to see a variety of plays, not a single "long-run" production. Mr. Benson alone can see to this, because it is part of his scheme that, instead of being frittered away on drawing-room comedy or musical farce, the whole energies of himself and his company should be concentrated all the year round, whether in London or on tour, on keeping practically the whole Shakespearian *répertoire* alive upon the modern stage.

The infinite variety of Tragedy, Comedy, and History-play that Mr. Benson has thus been able to pack into, first the week, then the fortnight, and now even the three weeks of the Festival's span has done much to give the present-day Festival audiences their cosmopolitan character. Each year, like his predecessors, he has, by the wish of the



OPHELIA.



PORTIA.



BEATRICE.



LADY MACBETH.

MISS ELLEN TERRY IN FOUR OF HER SHAKESPEARIAN RÔLES.

Photographs by Window & Grove, Baker Street, W.

Memorial Council, made some one previously neglected play the special revival of the year; but he has mounted it artistically—in some cases even splendidly—and has kept it in the *répertoire* of his itinerary, so that it can take its place with other plays in support of the special feature of the next year's programme. In this manner the Festival playgoers have been able to see the great Roman trilogy, "Coriolanus," "Julius Cæsar," and "Antony and Cleopatra" at consecutive performances one year, and a still more interesting archæological study in the first attempt ever made on the English stage at a regular

performance in chronological order. Such a moment as Henry the Fifth's prayer before the Battle of Agincourt, wherein the kneeling monarch protests his attempted atonement for the murder of Richard the Second, that secured his father's crown, becomes doubly poignant when the auditors have but two nights previously seen the hapless Richard grace the triumph of proud Bolingbroke, and but one night since have witnessed the alarms and excursions which left that same victorious Bolingbroke so little joy in his advancing years. Moreover, the history-plays that are weak in point of dra-

Horatio (Mr. Harcourt-Williams).

Hamlet (Mr. F. R. Benson).

Ghost (Mr. Fitzgerald).



Photo by]

HAMLET BEFORE HIS FATHER'S GHOST.

[Ellis & Walery, Baker Street, W.

"I'll call thee Hamlet—King, Father, Royal Dane!"

cycle of Shakespeare's plays from English history, "King John," "Richard II.," "Henry IV.," "Henry V.," "Henry VI.," and "Richard III." This cycle filled one of the weeks of last year's Festival, and this year "Henry VIII." is to be added to the list, with the incomparable Ellen Terry as the wronged Queen Katharine, one of the noblest portraits in the great actress's splendid gallery of noble women with whose names she has identified her own for all time.

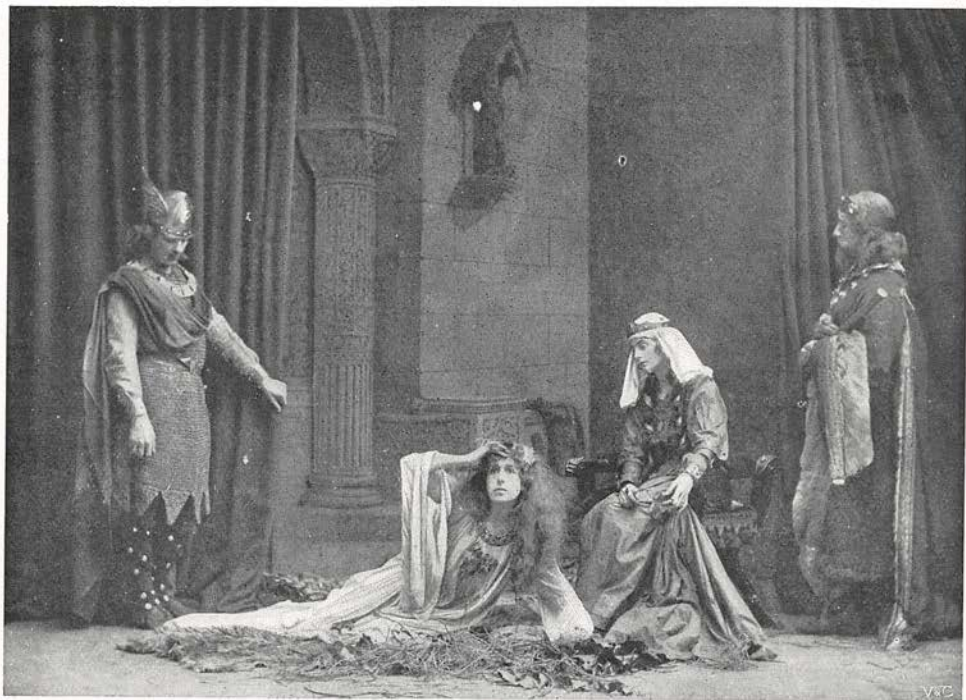
The interest of these chronicle-plays is enormously enhanced by their consecutive

matic unity, such as "Henry IV." and "Henry VI.," in this way find their real importance, as a series of scenes filling in an important gap in the period of English history, illustrated by the more dramatic chronicle-plays.

In addition to these histories, Roman and English, for the revivifying of which they have shown so apt a spirit, Mr. Benson, his clever wife, and remarkably artistic company have been responsible for revivals, in days before they had been revived at all on the London stage, of such plays as "The Merry Wives of Windsor," "A Midsummer Night's

Laertes (Mr. Frank Rodney).

Ophelia (Mrs. Benson). The Queen (Miss Dillon). King (Mr. A. Whitby).



THE MADNESS OF OPHELIA.

"I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died."

Horatio (Mr. Harcourt-Williams).

Grave-digger (Mr. Weir).

Hamlet (Mr. F. R. Benson).



HAMLET AND THE GRAVE-DIGGER.

"This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester."

Two photographs by Ellis & Walery, Baker Street, W.

Dream," "The Tempest," "The Taming of the Shrew," and "Timon of Athens." Even "Pericles, Prince of Tyre," has found a brief "local habitation" on the boards, but that was in the adaptation of the veteran Mr. John Coleman, who produced the play under Mr. Benson's management two years ago, when half the strength of the Benson Com-



Photo by]

[Lafayette, Dublin.

MRS. F. R. BENSON AS KATHARINA IN "THE TAMING OF THE SHREW."



Photo by]

[Lafayette, Dublin.

MRS. BENSON AS JULIET.

pany was engaged in its London campaign at the Lyceum.

And in the midst of this recondite labour of restoring to the stage the poet's long-neglected work, the more frequently acted of his plays have still held their own. Rosalind and her fellows have "fleeted the time carelessly, as they did in the golden age," here upon the confines of the very Forest of Arden of which Shakespeare wrote, while the foresters have borne on a deer from the same Charlecote Park, wherein tradition says the poet went a-deer-stealing; Shylock has been baffled of his bond by the Daniel come to judgment; Sir Toby Belch and his roysterers have fooled Malvolio in the Illyrian Garden, and Beatrice and Benedick have made a match of their two mad wits. And when "the tragic

sock" has been on, Macbeth has murdered sleep, Romeo and Juliet have plighted their tragic troth, and Othello has loved the gentle Desdemona "not wisely but too well." Lastly, the Prince of Denmark has tardily avenged his father's murder, and Ophelia has chanted her "snatches of old songs" not only within the wonted three hours' traffic of the stage, but in the larger sphere of character and motive supplied by the performance of the entire text of the play, with whole speeches and scenes long omitted from accepted "acting versions."

The retrospect of this splendid pomp is starred with memories of many notable individual performances. The "exquisite" Second Richard, subtle and pathetic in his fall, of Mr. Benson himself, but lately "discovered" and acclaimed a really great performance by metropolitan critics, stands first, perhaps, for sheer originality; but in saying so one does not forget the same actor's noble Henry V., his very spiritual Hamlet, his grimly pathetic, though more Browningsque than Shakespearian, Caliban. In eccentric comedy one recalls also his clever Malvolio and his Benedick with equal pleasure, not to mention a number of more familiar rôles.

Then there is Mr. Weir—the very counterfeit presentment of Shakespeare's pragmatical weaver, Nick Bottom—or, again, of the poet's Dogberry, Launcelot Gobbo, Stephano, and Sir Toby Belch. All who have any feeling for Shakespearian humour must doff their caps in gratitude to Mr. Weir. Mr. Frank Rodney's wide range, from virile Macduff through poetical Ferdinand to the quick-witted Clown of "Twelfth Night," is only rivalled in the mind's eye by his own more austere effects in such a rôle as the good Duke Humphrey of "Henry VI."

Then there is the splendid truculence of Mr. Oscar Asche's Jack Cade and Pistol, the rich sonority of his Prince of Morocco, and the tender melancholy of his Banished



Photo by]

[Ellis & Walery, Baker Street, W.

MRS. BENSON AS OPHELIA.

Duke. Mr. Lyall Swete's pathetic appeal as Menenius in "Coriolanus," or as the father of a banished son in "Richard II.," disputes, for preference, with his whimsical Sir Andrew Ague-cheek and Trinculo. And his King John of last year will not be forgotten. Mr. Brydone's touching old Adam and his sententious Polonius must be added to a list that is by no means

Gertrude of Miss Ada Ferrar, the delightful Celia of Miss Constance Robertson, and the finely humorous Dame Quickly, Nurse, and Curtis of Miss Alice Denvil.

Many of these performances will be repeated at this year's Festival, which is to last from April 14 to May 3, and as happily planned novelty comes Miss Ellen Terry's noble impersonation of the wounded majesty of Katharine of Arragon—perhaps the finest performance of the great actress, in "the grand manner," as distinct from her gentler and more girlish rôles. Miss Terry has not been seen in the part for some ten years now, and her reappearance in it will therefore have the interest of novelty—at least, to the rising generation of playgoers. It is hoped that Mr. Benson will also succeed



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[Taylor, Bishop Auckland.

MR. F. R. BENSON AS CALIBAN.

exhausted, but which must end with the admirable Jacques contributed by Mr. Hermann Vezin to the Festival of 1900.

Of the poet's women-characters one recalls more especially the merry Beatrice and Rosalind of Mrs. Benson, and the same actress's dainty and lissom Titania, of the very essence of childhood's fairydom—while in work of an entirely opposite *genre* her stormy Shrew and almost painfully realistic Doll Tearsheet confirm an impression of exceptional versatility. And then, having got so far, one remembers the haunting effect of both her mad scene as Ophelia and her sleep-walking scene in "Macbeth."

The gracious Rosalind and Portia of Miss Marion Terry, fine artist in all that she undertakes, the striking Lady Macbeth of Miss Calhoun, and the girlish charm of Miss Lily Brayton's Desdemona, stand out distinctly, and in secondary rôles one recalls especially the conscience-stricken Queen



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[Bassano, Old Bond Street, W.

MR. BENSON AS ROMEO.

in persuading Miss Terry to repeat her splendid Volumnia and possibly her brilliant Portia as well.

Thus much for the gallery of individual portraits in the Memorial Theatre's recent history, and for the "productions," generally, of this lengthy list of plays it must at once be said that Mr. Benson has more than justified the Memorial Council's

faith in his artistic discretion. To affirm as much is not to deny that there has been occasional food for critical debate—small “points of perversity,” perhaps, rather than absolute blemishes. But what art-work is above and beyond all criticism? And where so much is so laudable, so finely illuminating to the poet’s text, and in many cases so truthfully inspired, minor remonstrance is well nigh compelled to hide its diminished head. Take it for all in all, the arduous work has been carried through with a certain compelling power, an admirably informing taste in stagecraft, and a wonderful resource-

Katharina (Mrs. Benson).

should remain, in all the fastness of its Warwickshire riverside, the be-all and the end-all of Shakespearian revival. In London the air hums, at the moment, with talk, practical and unpractical, of a National or Municipal Theatre. To many of the people who are now discussing the idea with animation it is one of complete novelty. Yet more than a century ago Garrick dreamed of a playhouse on the banks of the Avon that should supply not merely a fit setting for the celebration of our national poet’s memory by the appropriate performance of his plays, but also a centre

Petruchio (Mr. Benson).



Photo by]

Grumio (Mr. Weir).

[Ellis & Walery, Baker Street, W.

“THE TAMING OF THE SHREW”: KATHARINA MAKES ACQUAINTANCE WITH HER HUSBAND’S HOUSEHOLD.

fulness of *ensemble* in the acting. These are qualities which took some time to make their due effect in London, where the magnificent but very occasional representation of a single Shakespearian play, for as long as it can possibly attract, has for years past been synonymous with the neglect, for the time being, of all the poet’s other work. But Stratford Festival-goers have now had the satisfaction of hearing their appreciative verdict of the Benson Company’s work heartily endorsed by many of the keenest critical spirits of the day. And the last thing that your serious Festival-goer desires is that the English Bayreuth

of dramatic study and a school for the actor’s art. The latter half of this ideal, though kept ever in mind by the late Mr. Charles Flower and the other promoters of the Memorial scheme, has yet to be realised; but something, at least, of its spirit is being carried into effect while the artistic impulse given to Mr. Benson’s work by these annual Festivals survives in productions of real beauty and value borne onward through the land by the players, to form a quickening intellectual force in the Philistia of our drab Modernity, long after the Festival’s brief traffic has reached its appointed end.