

The Stage.

By S. E. GREVILLE-SMITH.

MR CUYLER HASTINGS, the young American actor, and the company supporting him have been making a triumphal progress through the colony. They have brought something wholly new with them, and their mode of representation also is not without originality. What specially dif-

ferentiates the plays produced under the direction of entrepreneurs like Mr J. C. Williamson from those of the ordinary type is their completeness. Not only are the leading roles filled by artists, but the parts of the footman, the errand boy, the paltriest accomplice of the villain, the maid-servant and the non-descript personages who merely walk on and off, are taken by actors and actresses who can, and on occasion do, perform work of much higher importance. Further, the scenery and mechanical effects actually fulfil the requirements of the playwright, by completing the illusion and inducing a momentary belief in the reality of the life behind the footlights. The involuntary indications of fear, apprehension and relief, the deep inspiration, the faint shudder, and the sighs of varying degrees of duration, form the best tribute of audiences not easily moved, not quite uncynical, and certainly not uncritical. "Sherlock Holmes" would be interesting as an ordinary melodrama acted by a scratch company, but it would not draw the quality of audience that Mr Gillette and Mr Hastings can command. In the story of the sad scamp, Francois Villon, whose life and adventures are idealised by Mr Justin Huntly McCarthy, the Company are seen in a fitter setting, one according more with their degree of excellence; yet Villon does not excel Holmes in point of interest, the interest that absorbs. The words are better, the ideas are grander, the ideals are nobler, the atmosphere is not so essentially sordid in the one play as in the other, while the love story is infinitely more natural, more captivating. But Holmes is of our day, and that fact ensnares our sympathy. "Secret Service" is a striking incident in the great Civil War in America. Love and war, these are the themes that discover the greatest charm for us, and Mr



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