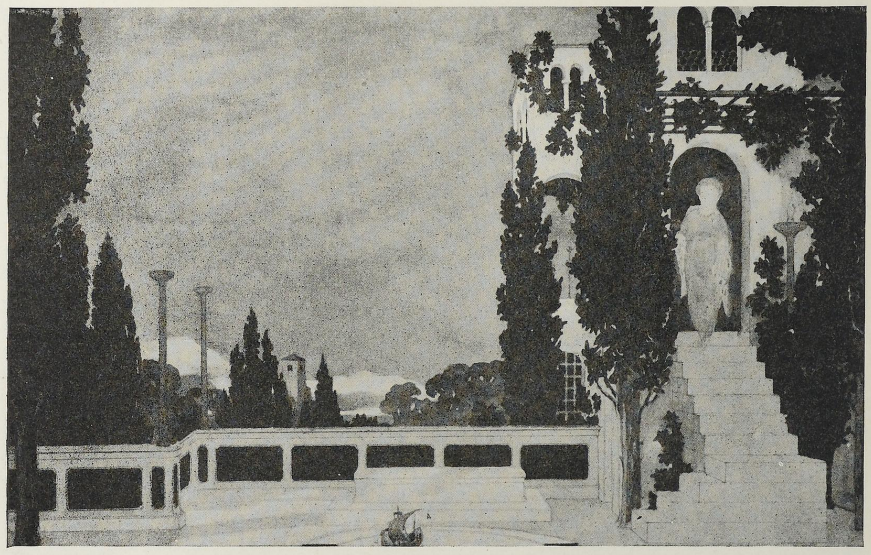

"A RICH LADY'S HOUSE AT FLORENCE" (ACT III OF "THE LOVING HEART," NEW THEATRE, 1918). BUILT SCENE WITH PANORAMA. DESIGNED BY W. BRIDGES ADAMS

## THE ART OF THE THEATRE: THE DESIGNS OF W. BRIDGES ADAMS

THE influence that the great modern stage pictorialists, Bakst, Balla, Derain, Roerich, and Picasso, or the advocates of "plastic" decoration, men like Sam Hume, Robert Edmond Jones, Raymond Johnson, and Max Reinhardt, have had upon the younger school of stage-decorators cannot be traced in the designs and settings of Mr. W. Bridges Adams, of whose work we give several notable examples. In opposition to the views of the school of the newer scene-designers he does not hold the opinion that the decorative elements in a production should be considered as ends in themselves, but merely as contributions towards a completeness of unity of effect. It is his aim to create first and foremost the most fitting frame and background for the acting. This does not by any means signify that he invariably and unhesitatingly accepts the old theatre conventions. Although he does not strip the stage of everything that might conceivably interfere with the action of the play, he does not, on the other hand, hold a brief for the time-honoured pictorial methods of decoration. It is his conception that the modern stage-director should be possessed of that artistic insight that will enable him to bind together the separate processes of acting and of the designing of scenery, costumes, and lighting. He frankly admits that in his opinion the art-value of a play should be made subordinate to its dramatic value. If he feels that he can emphasize this latter by giving an almost literal description on canvas of the stage directions written down by the author, he is not afraid to adopt this method occasionally—adding to the total appeal and bringing about a close harmony with the work of the author. In short, whether purely pictorial, plastic, or decorative, the character of all his scenic designs is determined in each case by the spirit of the play.

Mr. Adams does not agree with those who believe that the theatre of to-day is to



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