

With the First Nighters

ROBERT MANTELL
in
SHAKESPEARE.

Rather memorable has been the week which closes tonight at the Salt Lake theater with Mr. Mantell in "King Richard the Third"—memorable because we have had a group of Shakespeare's plays presented intelligently and in some cases sumptuously.

Lear, Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Richard, Shylock and Richelieu!

It has seemed almost impossible at times during the week that one man's range of genius was compassing them all. Splendid, compelling, impressive and superb have been the characterizations—the dramatic treat of years at the old Theater and the most pretentious presentation of Shakespeare since the palmiest days of Booth.

Reluctantly then I tell the story of the Mantell's audiences for the week.

They were fair—better probably than Shakespeare has drawn in Salt Lake in ten years—but far from what the Mantell engagement deserves.

Obvious is the reason. Can an actor with his personality and talent alone pull one into a theater seat for three hours to see and hear a play of which every line, every scene and every situation is but the personification of repetition? Can an actor draw to his performances those who have seen the characterizations he assays time and again when such characterizations are of a people and period obsolete; of speech strange and of such nature that it requires the exercise of intellectuality to enjoy them?

Look to Mantell's audiences this week for your answer.

They tell the story of the irresistible appeal of the modern over the obsolete for the average playgoer. Against Francis Wilson, Fritz Scheff, Willie Collier or Anna Held, Mr. Mantell fights a losing battle on the actor's common ground of box receipts. It's hard to believe until one sees the vacant seats and yet when you stop to think of it—it's not so strange. Why should a man go to see a play over and over again—a play in which he can run along ahead in the plot every little while and wait for the actor to catch up to him? Why should a man see a play that lacks the essential element of surprise for him? Because it's Shakespeare and Mantell? True—but the average playgoer is but the average man and the latter wants his play-hour for amusement, laughter and forgetfulness of the reality and materiality of things. You cannot sit idly through Lear, Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth or Richard the Third. It requires some intellectuality and mental activity to appreciate and follow these characterizations. Carp on the decadence of public taste as regards the drama if you will, but just the same the average playgoer will see Shakespeare about one night in a season, enjoy it appreciably, and nine out of every other ten nights flock to the tights and feminine loveliness of a musical show or the racy situations of a problem play.

All of which but throws into stronger relief the majesty, the power and beauty of Shakespeare for those who love to listen to the splendid lines of the bard as through his plays they roll from the lips of such an actor as Mantell. Sweeping the whole range of human life they go, now storming the heights of tragedy—now swelling on silently as a great deep stream and through it all touching the basic passions with the hand of a master.

There are those for whom Shakespeare will always hold an irresistible appeal when brought forth by men of Mantell's ability, and enough undoubtedly to insure the success of the productions

of the immortal works whenever such an actor shall be found. The days of the packed houses and public clamor for the classics are toward the setting sun, however, and yet can be con-

Salt Lake numbers sufficient of those who will turn out for his plays to make a worthy Shakespearean engagement fairly successful from a box office standpoint. It has been so this week



Robert Mantell as "Shylock"

demned, who, having seen Shakespeare from boyhood up, loving him perhaps, revering him, and always respecting—does not hurry to see him played every time he comes to town?

with Mr. Mantell.

The dailies have told the story of his repertoire. There have been extravagant things said of Mr. Mantell's acting during the

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