

enthusiastic applause as that with which they greeted Mr. Sullivan, not only at the fall of the curtain at the close of each evening's performance, but as each act-drop fell upon an exhibition of histrionic and dramatic talent rarely given us in Toronto to witness. Mr. Sullivan's genius may fairly rank with that of any of the tragedians of the day; and though he fails to satisfy us in all his personations, he is possessor of those gifts that place him among the most eminent of his profession.

The characteristics of his acting are those of the old school of tragedians, and his plays are those with which a previous generation are most familiar. A veteran actor is at some disadvantage in appearing before a generation younger than his own, as the characteristics of the old plays in which he finds himself most at home are not such as modern audiences appreciate. In such dramas as "The Gamester" and "The Stranger," for instance, it is hard to find material to attract the playgoer of to-day; and it appears to be equally difficult to obtain the kind of support necessary to give flavour and acceptability to their presentation. It is otherwise, of course, with the perennial works of Shakespeare and with those of modern dramatists; and an intellectual pleasure of no ordinary kind was anticipated in witnessing Mr. Sullivan in "Richard III.," "Hamlet," and "Richelieu." The first-mentioned play was presented in the well-known version of Colley Cibber, which is now universally substituted on the stage for the original drama by Shakespeare. Some of the most telling points in the acting play are Cibber's, and so considerable a proportion of the dialogue belongs to him that it would be only just to connect his name with that of Shakespeare on the playbill. As *Richard III.* Mr. Sullivan achieved a conspicuous and enviable triumph. His personation of the wily and hateful Plantagenet is a living embodiment of the character created by the dramatist—for a creation it is, quite unlike the historical Richard—and we have him before us in all the lineaments, physical and mental, with which the author has endowed him. The impersonation was one of extraordinary fidelity and vigour: the deformity of the man, his cruelty, his cunning, his impetuosity and resolution. and his moods of momentary compunction and swift recovery of himself, were all vividly and powerfully realised. Every phase of thought and every impulse were exhibited to view. And as each mental feature was perfectly given, so every action was swift and immediate, every word stirring and emphatic, and every look stern, relentless, or hypocritical. There was no possibility of trifling with the man; no impeding him in his purpose, no softening his heart, no cajoling him or making him less implacable. His repulse of Buckingham:—

"Thou troublest me; I am not in the vein,"

is the key to his character as interpreted by Mr. Sullivan. In the courtship with Lady Anne his bluntness and determination are made plainly apparent beneath his hypocritical mask. As the drama unfolded itself and grew in interest the realization naturally became more striking; and the ascendancy of the actor over his audience increased until the death scene, which came at a fitting climax, and brought the enthusiasm of the house to a culmination. Altogether there can hardly be a doubt that Mr. Sullivan's *Richard III.* is the finest now on the stage.

In his conception of *Hamlet*, Mr. Sullivan has also been influenced by old stage traditions, and the successive phases of mental perplexity and vagary which the melancholy Dane exhibits found expression in the grave tones and sombre colours of a school of acting rapidly passing away. The performance, though a fine one, was not so completely satisfactory as that of *Richard III.* The principal defect was a superabundance of "stage business." It is a grievous fault to impart even the slightest air of artificiality to so natural and truthful a character as *Hamlet*. Mr. Sullivan's *Richelieu* was another fine performance, and may be fairly placed on a level with his *Hamlet*. It was, however, altogether lacking in that element of grandeur which was so conspicuous in Mr. T. C. King's wonderful impersonation of the great Cardinal, to which it was also inferior in other respects. The contrast between the two is suggested by a passage in the play itself. *Richelieu* appropriates to himself a *mot* of *Lysander's*, that "where the lion's skin fell short he *eked it out with the fox's*." In Mr. King's personation the lion predominates; in Mr. Sullivan's the fox. The words which we have italicised show that the former conception is the true one. Mr. Sullivan's *Beurley*, in "The Gamester," was, we are constrained to say, a failure, being false in both conception and execution. The play is a terribly lugubrious one, without a spark of wit or humour to light up, even for a moment, the pervading gloom. To make it acceptable to a modern audience, the performance must above all things be realistic. Mr. Sullivan, however, is melodramatic throughout, a fault which, in the death scene, culminates in the merest rant. The cause of Mr. Sullivan's failure here is probably not far to seek. He has been acting for so many years in *heroic* tragedy, that he imports, no doubt unconsciously, the tone and manner appropriate only to that branch of the drama into *domestic* tragedy, where they are quite out of place. As *The Stranger*, Mr. Sullivan was more natural, but the part is a poor one at best, and calls for little acting of any kind.

We are unable to speak favourably of the general support given to Mr. Sullivan by the Opera House Company; but as it would over-