

IRVING AND TERRY.

The Theater Packed From Pit to Dome Greets Them.

BRILLIANT PLAY AND AUDIENCE

A Magnificent Production of "The Merchant of Venice" — Mr. Irving's Speech—Who Were There.

In the annals of theatrical productions in this city the presentation of "The Merchant of Venice" at the Seattle theater last evening will ever be a memorable occasion. It was fitting that the finest assemblage of men and women which ever gathered under roof in this city should greet the foremost actor and actress of the English race. In thus honoring these great artists Seattle has done herself proud, and the spectacle which was presented from the stage was one to quicken the soul, stir the heart and call forth the highest efforts of the most resplendent genius. Every seat in the theater was filled, and the foyer was filled with standing humanity. Fully one-half of the audience were ladies, and this proportion held good in all parts of the house even to the highest tier of seats in the gallery. In the boxes, parquet and dress circle, with scarcely a dozen exceptions, all of the ladies and gentlemen were in evening dress, while the same was true of fully one-half those in the balcony. Many elegant costumes were noticeable, and all that the wealth, beauty and refinement of the city could contribute lent elat to the occasion, and made it a grand social function. The number of handsome and elegantly attired women present was very large. It was not only a large and fashionable audience, but it was an enthusiastic one. The spontaneous greeting that met the great actors upon their first entrance was a tribute to their fame, and showed that the people of Seattle were willing to accept them at the estimate of London, New York and other great cities. But when 1,500 people volleyed and thundered their applause at the conclusion of the great fourth act—thundered it till the curtain had risen four times to allow Mr. Irving and Miss Terry to bow their appreciation, and thundered again until Mr. Irving came forward to express their acknowledgment in words; that meant the meed of genius. Mr. Irving and Miss Terry appreciated the applause. It was not boisterous; there were no cat-calls, and canes and sole leather contributed but little to the tribute. But it was hearty and generous. Mr. Irving neatly expressed the feelings of himself and Miss Terry when the insistent calls finally brought him before the curtain. He said:

"I cannot express the deep and heartfelt appreciation I feel for the spontaneous and evidently sincere and appreciative welcome we have received from this brilliant company. We have come a long way to meet you, but it was worth coming a much longer way than we did to be greeted by such a brilliant and appreciative audience as this one. Speaking especially for myself and on behalf of Miss Terry and each and all of us, I desire to express our heartfelt gratitude for the brilliant welcome you have given us. We are glad that our methods have pleased you and I hope that we may have the honor and privilege of visiting your wonderful and beautiful city at some future time."

The verdict of all who saw Mr. Irving as Shylock last night must be that he is the most remarkable actor of the era on the English-speaking stage. Mr. Irving, when first he played Shylock, undoubtedly created a new stage tradition. In early times Shylock had been treated as a comic character—something as the Devil or Judas in the old miracle plays—and even the laudable change which Macklin made in rendering him a serious and even a passionate character, did not complete the image or simulacrum which filled Shakespeare's picturesque imagination. Mr. Irving went to the Mediterranean for his archetypal Jew, and brought back an image full of the dignity as well as the passion of the East. Shakespeare had put into the player's mouth the words of a devout Hebrew to whom the Pentateuch is what the Koran is to a Mohammedan. His accurate knowledge of Old Testament history

This Jacob from one holy Abraham was—
The third possessor; aye, he was the third;
and his devout belief in Divine interposition in favor of any of the chosen race such as when in the midst of his whirlwind of passion he pauses to thank God for the series of disasters which have overwhelmed Antonio, all show a man in whom are great possibilities of personal dominance even in a member of an out-cast race which had in the sixteenth century its own counterpart of the Ghetto and the Pale of our own day in Rome and in Russia. Shylock was a "gentleman" in the midst of the Venetian turmoil where "merchants most did congregate," and to those who last night saw the greatest actor of his century sweep on the stage with a commanding presence which neither the yellow "badge of his ribs" over his forehead nor the affectation of a fawning manner could destroy, it must have seemed as if one of the greatest of all the great creation of the master mind had stepped out of the poet's pages and become crystalized or materialized into concrete shape. With the idea of such a central dominant figure in his mind, and with also the idea of a female counterpart of his own power as an actor and in a role which Shakespeare placed side by side with Shylock, as the original bibliographers wrote the Old and the New Testament in one volume, Mr. Irving must have found the horizon of his artistic effort widen as he advanced in his work of producing the play. Thus it was that the picturesque surrounding of the *dramatis personae* became evolved. Venice is one of the few cities of old which today retains the characteristic attributes of its mediaeval beauty and splendor. Today the canals and palaces, the lagoons and bridges are as they were when Machiavelli and Shakespeare may have exchanged ideas, with only the newer colors of stucco and marble mellowed and refined by the sunshine and sunbeats of three centuries. On the stage of the Seattle theater last night was shown for the first time the beauty of Venice and its suburbs. And any one to whom pictures of the city on the sea are familiar or who have passed in their gondolas through the silent streets could have pointed out such familiar objects as the Doge's Palace or the Lion of St. Mark. Certainly the artists have worked admirably, for a more beautiful series of pictures has never been seen. But let there be no mistake; the play is not overidden or dominated by the scenic beauty. All is truly beautiful; but it is beautiful because the play allows of it, and its beauty, so long as it is suitable, enhances the pleasure of the audience and the force of the play. For instance, though the opening scene of a public place and "Shylock's house by a bridge" are realities of Venetian scene, the scenes at Belmont—"Portia's Home" and "Portia's Garden"—are purely ideal, and are so intended by the poet, so that the soft beauty of shaded sun and falling moonlight, of terraced garden and flowing water may soothe the senses of the spectator to mould their will to the enjoyment of that sensuous beauty which is the

proper environment of the beautiful lady of Belmont. And a beautiful lady, truly, is the heiress of Belmont as shown by Miss Terry. In all her movements, as in all her moods, her winning prettiness and her stately dignity hold and charm. True woman throughout, she moves like the spirit of a dream through the realities of life. It is not too much to say that Ellen Terry is the very personification of grace and sweetness, and in after years she will be spoken of as a great tradition, which sets an example impossible of realization. As Mr. Irving's version of "The Merchant of Venice" restores the long-banished fifth act, Portia is seen at the best, when the gloom of Shylock's fall, with which it is impossible not to sympathize, is dissipated in the poetical and at the same time humorous solution of the mystery of the lost rings, the play is restored to its place as a comedy, in which Shylock's passion and hate are dominant portions of the play as such but not the whole. Of course the most dramatic scene is the trial, and here the whole resources of histrionic art seem to be exhibited by the players, though in that form of artistic truth which supports the teaching *ars celare artem*. The rage and violence of Shylock, his hatred of Antonio both as man and merchant and Christian; his frenzy at his treatment by his daughter and at the loss of his treasure—all which seem to have been accentuated by the actor so as to allow of the finer play of feeling which can only be shown in calmer style—have given way to the cold, deadly calm of the man who knows that his triumph is at hand and that his revenge is soon to be glutted. Shylock can now afford to wait—nay, more, the very waiting is in itself enjoyment of the fiercest kind, for it allows a prolonged gloating over the pain and woe of his victim. The poet has raised his puppet high into the air in order that his fall may be the greater, and so great is that fall that those who have momentarily hated him for his greed and the lust of his revenge feel their rage turned to pity and their scorn to sympathy as with bowed head and broken mien he passes out, his woe-begone, agony-drawn face leaving on the beholder an impression which no time can ever efface. If an audience were only to see this one look on the great actor's face he would undoubtedly receive some of the same meed and tribute of approval as was shown in the positive tempest of applause which shook the building at the close of the fourth act. Mr. William Terriss as Bassanio was strong and forcible and graceful, and Mr. Haviland an impressive Antonio.

In showing such a play in Seattle and in such a way Mr. Irving and Miss Terry have created a debt of gratitude on the part of our city and citizens to whom art and all the sweetness which follows art are dear. As the costume of Venice was much the same as that of London in the Elizabethan period, the audience of last night saw the play as Shakespeare saw it in his own theater, with, of course, the additional advantage that last night we had scenery and effects of light and shade which were non-existent in the sixteenth century, but which would have without doubt made glad the heart of the poet. Altogether Seattle has never seen such a play or such acting, and the memory of last night must be a lasting one. Tonight the same play is to be repeated at Tacoma, and as arrangements have been completed to secure the return of visitors from Seattle after the play, an added opportunity is given to those who could not obtain places for last night to see what they never saw before and may never see again.

An effort was made to interview Mr. Irving and Miss Terry between acts but they were inaccessible owing to an inexorable rule of Mr. Irving's not to receive anyone while on the stage, and even not to allow anyone not connected with the production upon the stage. Mr. Bram Stoker, who has been for fifteen years acting manager for Mr. Irving, however, said that the great actor was very much impressed with what he had seen of the natural beauties of this section of country, and that he felt very grateful for the warm reception he had met on the Pacific coast. The American four of the company will last until about the end of March, when the company will return to England. There are over ninety people in the company, which includes some of the best known artists on the English stage. As to which of Mr. Irving's many impersonations he felt himself strongest in, Mr. Stoker said that he never had heard him say and he doubted if he had ever answered that question unqualifiedly, nor the question as to which of them he liked best to present, but of the great characters he had presented oftentimes perhaps Shylock and Hamlet. His impersonation of Shylock was one of his greatest successes, and on its first presentation by him at the Lyceum theater in London in 1879 it had the unparalleled run of 250 nights. Miss Terry's greatest successes have been in the presentation of Beatrice and Portia.

The company goes to Tacoma tonight, where the "Merchant of Venice" will again be produced. The train will be held after the play for the benefit of those from this city who wish to attend. The company will go from Tacoma to St. Paul and thence East.

PARQUETTE, BOX AND BALCONY.

Some of the Fifteen Hundred Who Saw the Curtain Rise.

The audience last night was seated by 8 o'clock, when the curtain rose. There was no coming in and going out save of the most unobtrusive kind between acts. The people were there to enjoy the play and didn't want to miss a word. Among those who were there were:

Box No. 1—Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Lowman, Mr. and Mrs. David Kellogg, Miss Emery, J. D. Hoge, jr.

Box No. 2—Hon. J. S. Clarkson, Isaac Trumbo, of San Francisco; Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Noble, Mr. and Mrs. L. S. J. Hunt, Mr. Brownell, of Everett.

Box No. 3—James P. Oberteuffer, Mrs. Ferriss and Miss Ferriss, of Tacoma; A. W. Coleman.

Box No. 4—Hon. and Mrs. Jacob Furth, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Terry, Miss Furth.

Box No. 5—W. Marshall, Mrs. G. Dougherty, Mrs. J. B. Jones, Misses Calvert, all of Victoria.

Box No. 7—R. S. Jones, Miss Jones, Mr. and Mrs. George Shannon, of Olympia; Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Engle.

Hon. and Mrs. John H. McGraw, and daughter; Mrs. J. T. Lentz, Mrs. Chambers, Dr. and Mrs. Miller, of Victoria; Mrs. M. A. Kellogg, Mrs. Coffin, J. E. Boyd, George Beckinger, wife and daughters; Mrs. R. A. Butler and daughters, E. B. Wishaar and son, Mr. and Mrs. D. W. Semple, Mrs. J. N. Harvey, Mr. and Mrs. Frank L. Cullin, C. M. Monahan, J. M. Dikeman, Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Roberts, A. A. Levy, Mr. and Mrs. M. J. Hoff, of Everett; L. J. Stevens, Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Cull, Mr. and Mrs. L. H. Pontius, Mr. and Mrs. E. P. Epler and sister, Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Richville, Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Webb, Miss Webb, Master Webb, Mr. and Mrs. Will H. Barry, Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Summers, Mr. and Mrs. John Rigby, Mr. and Mrs. H. F. Beecher, Mrs. James Skinner and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Lowman, Miss Emery, Mr. and Mrs. E. Lobe, W. Wood, H. C. Kenna, C. H. Randall, Mr. and Mrs. L. Rockman, Mr. and Mrs. H. Eashore, H. Hicklin, Miss A. Sprigg, Mr. and Mrs. H. B. Stauson, Mrs. Watson, Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Curry, A. N. Thomson, Mrs. F. A. Butts, Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Miller, Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Martin, Mr. C. Weatherby, Mrs. Wilkinson, Mrs. E. D. Towne, Mrs. W. R. Towne, Mrs. W. L. Gazzam, Miss B. Lawrence, Dr. and Mrs. J. Shannon, Mrs. J. W. Dempsey, Mrs. S. Ellicott, Mr. D. G. Thomson, Mrs. A. M. Walker, Mrs. Ober, Mrs. A. Harter, Mrs. J. B. Brooks, Mr. W. H. Dill, Miss Wise, Miss Grubb, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Cham-