The Bells and Louis XI are devoted completely to Mr. Irving. In each he has a horrible tragic part that closes with death. Mathias is a person far less vividly conceived and presented than Louis, a man whose character is dominated and almost suppressed by remorseful ‘ear. He is haunted, cowed and tortured by all incidental reminders of his crime, most frightful among which is his crazed hearing of the sound of sleigh-bells at every happier occasion of his life. Upon Mr. Irving’s worn face and his frightened shifting eyes the whole play is focused, and the convulsive stiffening of his limbs in death, as he imagines himself being hanged, would truly

"Make mad the guilty and appal the free."

Louis XI is a superbly melodramatic, sensational portrait of a sly, suspicious, superstitious, gibbering, cruel old king, presented on the stage with the elegance of costume and the beauty of scenery Mr. Irving is famous for. Mr. Laurence Irving as the Duc de Nemours is satisfactory, although a trifle ranting, and Miss Hackney as the Dauphin is completely boyish and winning. Every instant of the play, however, is devoted primarily to some phase of the diabolical character of Louis. Cruelty, senility, overreaching shrewdness, suspicion even of his blindly beloved son; grovelling, bargaining, chattering piety; and a maniacal thirst for life and health,—how Mr. Irving presents all these, no words, but his own action can tell. The closing scene — of the monarch tottering and shivering, his face pallid and blue with imminent death, no longer able to articulate with his old cynical, dry distinctness of tone, or to scream with his old shrill fright, robed in the sky blue and ermine of coronation and crowned with that beautiful gemmed and pointed coronet of France — is a scene ghastly and never to be forgotten.

Louis XI, merely as acting, does not, however, seem to me as great a creation as Shylock, because it is a less complicated character,—unmitigated, slimy devilishness, with no attempt to excite anything but repugnance.