Perhaps there can be no better proof of the conscientious thoroughness and the taste of Mr. Sothern's *Hamlet* than the stage setting. It is gorgeous and elaborate but never obtrusive; with exceptional beauty of detail and harmony of effect it is never flauntingly brilliant, it has none of the varnished newness, it attempts none of the spectacular tableaux for example, of Mr. Mansfield's *Cesar*. And, rare discretion, the orchestra is kept in its place, and, triumphantly and exclusively, "the play's the thing."

Though liberally cut, the text preserves the scenes best worth keeping. In *Hamlet* Shakspere seems to have written rather for his own satisfaction, for the lovingly minute development and exposition of Hamlet's character, than with the aim of producing a compact, vigorous, acting play. Other Shaksperean plays are technically better done; and those who have seen *Hamlet* given entire admit that it is excessively long. Fortunately, Mr. Sothern's version keeps the scene of the King's prayer, and, at the end, the really beautiful spectacle of bearing off Hamlet's body on the shield. To admit these portions even Polonius must be willing to sacrifice his much abbreviated role.

Of Mr. Sothern's company it is literal truth to say that there is not one poor part. Personally, the Theatregoer cannot recall a Shakspere play given with such accuracy, ease and melody in reading the difficult verse lines. The King, Polonius, and Laertes are parts, easy, perhaps, to play; they were, at all events, well done. The ghost was excellent for his clear and melodious delivery. Ophelia is certainly the most difficult part in *Hamlet* and may easily spoil a performance. That Miss Loftus's Ophelia was good enough, is higher praise than it sounds at first. Altogether Mr. Sothern's company shows substantial improvement since its last *Hamlet* performances in Boston.

To balance the very high meed of praise Mr. Sothern deserves, we might complain that his voice is thick, that his wailing tones are not particularly effective, and that in moments of passionate and rapid speech he sputters. A graver criticism would be that in the more exalted scenes of the play he tends to declamation; yet we must admit that the last moments and the death scene are of the highest power. Natural seriousness of manner, an almost beautiful sadness of expression, give Mr. Sothern's *Hamlet* his true bodily appearance; deft and direct acting of the minor scenes of the dialogue with Polonius or the courtiers, gives a completely satisfactory picture of the prince in his quieter moments. The soliloquy "To be or not to be," is most simply and touchingly spoken. The part seems, however, to lack some of the tenderness, the winning sympathy that makes *Hamlet* Hamlet.

Mr. Sothern shows, like his company, steady improvement. His *Hamlet* is already an event; personally I am inclined to call it the event of the dramatic season, and promises'even to become an event in the history of the Shaksperean stage.

**Theatregoer.**