

MORAL REARMAMENT PLAY STAGED IN DURBAN

NEVER was it more obvious than at present that the world needs reminding of the cumulative danger of cold war and the selfish disregard of the wellbeing of others. For that reason alone, an ameliorative effort, through the medium of the stage, in such a presentation as "The Forgotten Factor"—the Durban premiere was at the Criterion Theatre last night before a packed house—deserves wholehearted commendation.

It is a play, written in America by Alan Thornhill—also remarkable by the fact that it is his first and only one—with the direct incentive of furthering what is called the Moral Rearmament Movement. But, as Shakespeare put it in "Hamlet," "the play's the thing" used to effect the desired purpose; and the purpose in "The Forgotten Factor" is to arouse the public conscience to the stern necessity for better human relationships between individuals and between employers and employees.

This puts the "motif" in a nutshell, but it is quite inadequate to express the full import of the theme as the author has treated it.

Already "The Forgotten Factor" has driven home the fact in 13 different countries that a tremendous responsibility rests upon every individual in his ordinary everyday life. Certainly in South Africa there are to be found families like the Wilsons and the Rankins in this play, the former in the upper strata of society and the latter among the working class, who are at war with one another and who spread the same spirit of antagonism into their relations in industry.

OPEN WAR

Richard Wilson, as President of a big industrial company, is one of the hard, heartless type of employers, who allows his factory hands to reach the stage of striking for their reasonable demands rather than meet them for negotiation and peaceful consideration of their claims. In Jim Rankin, as the Union Organiser in his works, he has to deal with a man of like determination and as adamant in his intolerance. What is open war between them breeds a vicious hate of one another. Both their homes are wrecked by wrangling and bitterness, with tears and unhappiness as an accompaniment.

It is all changed by Wilson's son, to whom the inspiration comes that the cure for it all

can be and must be by the self-confession of the individual that he is blameworthy and that he can work "snow-ball" reform if he has a change of heart himself.

FORCEFUL LESSON

The play is a most forceful and impressive application of the lesson. The actors are a cosmopolitan company whose identity is not disclosed on the programmes, and they give an effective performance, all of them contributing well to the strong situations which are built up by the author to the climax of the meeting of the strikers, headed by Rankin, in the home of the Wilsons, and the burying of all animosity and ill-feeling caused through stupid class and individual prejudices. The outstanding characterisation was that of Jim Rankin.

Before the play started, the Mayor, Mr. Ken Clarke, introduced Mr. Burns, who is a South African member of the company.

Mr. Burns told the audience something of the history of "The Forgotten Factor," and of the confidence the promoters felt in the ability of the Movement to change nations as it could individuals and communities.

With the company are the

Mackinac Singers of South Africa and they gave an acceptable prelude to the play with several appropriate and well rendered musical numbers.

C. H. P.