

LYCEUM THEATRE, SHEFFIELD.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

This palatial temple of the drama, which has taken the place of the City Theatre, will undoubtedly rank high in the list of beautiful new playhouses which are beginning to adorn the main streets of the principal provincial towns. The new theatre externally presents a most commanding and ornate appearance, occupying, as it does, an entirely isolated position, with exits into three important thoroughfares, viz., Tudor-street, Arundel-street, and Tudor-place. Mr W. R. Sprague has certainly had a difficult task, but a look at the building shows at once that he has triumphantly succeeded, for in place of the flat, uninteresting elevation of the old City Theatre, the eye of the artistic beholder is gladdened by a bold, classic frontage, with imposing Ionic columns and ornamental designs, symbolical of the high and honourable purpose for which the structure has been erected. The main architectural feature at the corner of Arundel and Tudor-streets is a lofty circular tower, surmounted by a copper dome, at the top of which, in heroic size, is poised on one foot a fine figure of Fame, who holds aloft a torch. In this will be placed an arc lamp of 500 candle power. The principal entrances are placed at this corner, and an iron and glass awning of artistic designs gives a comfortable and pleasing appearance to the whole. The upper circle, amphitheatre, and gallery exits are in Arundel-street, and there are emergency exits (in case of fire) on to the flat roofs of the dressing-rooms, which flank each side of the main building. The house is on the "two-tier" principle, and is arranged to hold 3,000 persons. No columns have been used, and from every seat there is an uninterrupted view of the stage. There are eight private boxes. On the ground floor, level with the street, are the stalls and pit. The first floor consists of grand circle and upper circle, and above is the spacious gallery, part of which is divided off into amphitheatre stalls. The stalls and circle fauteuils are roomy, and are luxuriously upholstered in crimson Utrecht velvet, the curtains, hangings, valances, and portières being of the same rich material. The corridors, staircases, lobbies, &c., are of unusual size, and the large space at the disposal of the architect has enabled him to provide a beautiful foyer, with ample accommodation in the shape of retiring-rooms, refreshment buffets, crush-rooms, and all necessary offices.

The salle and the charming vestibule have been exquisitely decorated in the style of Louis XIV., the box, circle, and gallery fronts being picked out with lovely and cunningly devised electric lamps. The ceiling and dome is a dream of beauty and chaste colouring, and the proscenium is a fitting frame for the land of fancy, humour, and romance which lies beyond its white and gold columns. The stage and auditorium are lighted entirely by electricity, but gas is also laid on in case of any temporary failure of the electric light. Little alteration has been made in the stage block, but an entirely new stage has been laid with all the latest improvements in the matter of traps, bridges, &c. The stage measures 72ft. from wall to wall, has a grid 50ft. high, and the opening is about 30ft. by 28ft. There are large carpenters' shops, property rooms, chorus rooms, and a spacious scene-dock, and Mr John Hart need have no fear of the Actors' Association, as there are twelve comfortable dressing-rooms, well furnished and provided with hot and cold water. In addition to the ordinary act-drop and tableau curtains, there is a steel curtain, which can be lowered at a moment's notice at an alarm of fire, and hydrants have been placed in every part of the theatre. Constructed mainly of steel, stone, and concrete, the building, practically speaking, is perfectly fireproof.

The theatre is the property of the Lyceum Theatre (Sheffield), Limited, and will be directed by Mr John Hart, who so successfully guides the destinies of the Grand, Leeds; the Royal, Bradford; and other leading provincial playhouses. Mr Hart's local representative is Mr T. Hopcutt, who is here well known and highly respected, and whose duties will be pleasantly arduous on Monday evening, when the first artists to tread the new stage will be her Majesty's servants, the Royal Carl Rosa opera company.

The theatre has been reconstructed from the designs of Mr W. R. Sprague, of Fitzalan House, Strand, London. The building contractors were Messrs Geo. Longden and Sons, of Sheffield. The plastic work has been supplied and the whole of the decorations have been designed and carried out by Messrs De Jong and Co., of London. The furnishing, &c., has been done by Cranston and Elliott, of Edinburgh. The stage has been stocked with excellent new scenery by Messrs E. G. Banks and A. G. Betts, and the beautiful and artistic act-drop reflects credit on the good taste and executive ability of Mr Henry Emden, the well-known scenic artist.