

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

With the graceful and imposing exterior of Mr. Beerbohm Tree's new theatre in the Haymarket, Londoners are already familiar, but so far only the privileged few have been admitted within the walls of the playhouse, which to-morrow night will be formally opened with the first performance in London of Mr. Gilbert Parker's "Seats of the Mighty." Built from the plans of Mr. C. J. Phipps, F.S.A., in the style of the Renaissance, Her Majesty's Theatre will seat between sixteen and seventeen hundred people, every one of whom will be able to enjoy an uninterrupted view of the stage.

Entering the house from the Haymarket, you find yourself in a delightful vestibule, decorated in Louis XIV. style, with oak panels and a deep frieze. The electric light is softly modulated, and visible only in wax-candle form, the candles fixed in sconces, which hang upon the walls; while the ceiling, with its oak beams and plaster panels, is delicately tinted and charmingly designed. Here the other afternoon Mr. Tree's guests were confronted by majestic footmen, who guarded the stairs leading to the auditorium, and whose brilliant scarlet coats, black satin knee-breeches, and powdered heads were in perfect harmony with their picturesque surroundings. Passing up the stairs and into the corridor at the back of the dress circle, we are interested to find that even from there the whole of the stage can be seen with perfect distinctness; and when later on Mr. Tree invites the more enterprising of his visitors to follow him to the topmost height of the shilling gallery, they are astonished at the excellence of the view which can be obtained from their exalted position, and at the pleasant feeling of air and space which prevails here, as in every other part of the theatre.

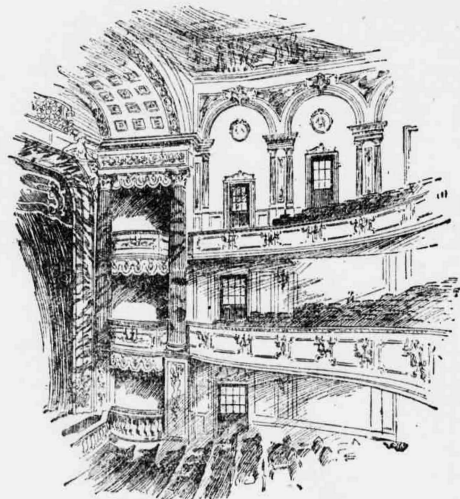
From this lofty perch we note, first, the exceptional beauty of the proscenium; the supporting columns and pilasters of *boche violette* marble, with their long lines of glittering *ormolu*, the Royal Arms in gold in the centre; and at the outer angles, on either side, recumbent figures, representing the tragic and the comic muse. The Royal monogram shines out in gold, on a medallion of *vieux-rose* velvet; and from the framework in which it is set, presently, at a word from Mr. Tree, the curtains of deep red velvet, with their gorgeous gold embroideries, are let down, so that we may see what the effect will be to-morrow night before the play commences.

Various experiments are tried, too, upon the stage with the electric lights, of which, by the way, there are three rows in different colours—white, red, and green. So perfect is the elaborate system of electric lighting now in working order at Her Majesty's, that it requires but the touch of one man's hand to produce in a moment an effect of bright sunshine or of moonlight, of warm red sunset, or of pale-tinted sunrise, or any of those half-tones which are even more valuable than the stronger effects of light and shade. The auditorium is illuminated partly by electric lights, similar to those which appear in the vestibule, mounted on sconces in exact imitation of the Fontainebleau candle brackets, but with electric light in place of caudle-wicks, and partly by a quaint chandelier, or rather "electrolite," in crystal and *ormolu*, in which the lights are also arranged in wax-candle form. The act-drop too is of historic interest, for it is an enlargement, painted by Mr. Dignum, of Coypel's famous piece of Gobelin's tapestry, "Dido receiving Æneas," which was made for the Duc d'Orléans, brother of Louis XIV.

Looking down over the sloping seats, which stretch away in front of the gallery, and which are separated from it by a wide passage and barrier, we are able to appreciate the comparative luxury of the sitting accommodation of the amphitheatre and the upper circle; while on the tier below, the first five rows are occupied by the dress-circle seats at 7s. 6d., and behind these the family circle seats at 5s. On the floor of the house Mr. Beerbohm Tree has made what will be to many a welcome innovation in the shape of several rows of "pit stalls" at 6s. each, which come between the half-guinea orchestra stalls and the half-crown pit. Seats can be booked for all parts of the theatre, except the pit and gallery; while the glass roof which projects over the pavement, all round the house, will give ample shelter to those who are obliged to wait outside before the doors are opened.

The spacious foyer is another interesting feature at Her Majesty's, with its open loggia overlooking the Haymarket, its mirrored walls and marble pillars, its refreshment buffet, which seems to withdraw itself discreetly into the background, and its beautiful Louis XV. tapestry-covered furniture. And, everywhere, the curtains and draperies are of deep crimson and gold, coming into effective contrast with the masses of white in panelling and frieze, and the dark grey-blue of the carpet, which, with its design repeating the monogram "V.R.L.," surmounted by a crown, alternately with the Tudor rose, has been specially manufactured for Her Majesty's. The arrangements for warming the theatre are excellent, and while the system of ventilation ensures the frequent freshening of the air, everything has been so carefully planned that no draughts are possible.

In every respect the comfort of the audience seems to have been the first consideration, and Mr. Tree, when he came back to Her Majesty's on Saturday afternoon, after saying a few words on Hamlet at the Society of British Artists in Suffolk-street, received many hearty congratulations, not only on the artistic beauty of his new theatre, but also on the thoughtful and kindly way in which he has provided for the comfort of every individual member of his audience. To see the house in perfection one must wait until to-morrow, when Mrs. Tree will speak the prologue, which has been written by the Poet Laureate, and when the first-night audience promises to be one of unusual interest; but the theatre, even as we saw it on Saturday afternoon, has a charm and a distinction peculiarly its own, and there is no doubt that it will take its place at once among the first of London's favourite play-houses.



THE INTERIOR.