

SUNDERLAND'S NEW EMPIRE THEATRE.

Opening Performance To-night.

At the invitation of Mr. Richard Thornton, a large company of ladies and gentlemen, including members of the Corporation, were on Saturday afternoon accorded a private view of the new Empire Theatre in High Street West, Sunderland. The guests were received by Mr. Harry Eaden, the manager (and late manager of the Newcastle Empire) and were allowed the full run of the whole of the building, with the great size and gorgeousness of which everyone seemed to be much impressed. It is, indeed, a wonderfully fine theatre, and one which even the Metropolis might well envy. The interior was especially admired, its many artistic beauties evoking most laudatory comments; whilst the theatrical visitors who are present were unanimous in pronouncing it to be one of the finest theatres in the country. As was frequently remarked on Saturday afternoon, the building is well worth coming a long way to see.

In an interval Mr. Frank Allen (assistant director and chief of the staff of the Moss-Stoll-Thornton and Allen combine), made a short speech in which he expressed the hope of Mr. Thornton that the new Empire Palace which he had had pluck enough to erect came quite up to their expectations. (Hear, hear.) Speaking for himself, Mr. Allen said he was filled with admiration and astonishment at the beauties of the decorations, the perfect acoustic properties, the clear and unobstructed lines of sight, the cleverly arranged entrances and exits so necessary for the safety of the public; in fact, taking the theatre as a whole, he could say with confidence that it would bear fair comparison with the most pretentious in the country. It was twenty-one years since Mr. Thornton commenced as a music-hall proprietor at South Shields, and the principle that he then laid down: that the entertainments over which he had oversight should be clean and wholesome and of such a character that any man could safely take his wife and family to witness, he had conscientiously adhered to all along. After alluding to Mr. Thornton's partnership with Sir H. E. Moss and the subsequent entry into the combine of Mr. Oswald Stoll—the greatest entertainment enterprise, by the way, that the world had ever seen, with a capital of over two millions of money—Mr. Allen said he felt sure that his auditors would agree that the new Sunderland Empire Palace Theatre was a credit to the architects (Messrs. W. W. and T. R. Milburn), to the builder (Mr. J. White), and to the town, and would prove to be worthy of the best traditions of the numerous and successful undertakings with which Mr. Thornton's name was associated.

The theatre opens to-night with a very powerful company, at the head of which is Miss Vesta Tilley, who was amongst the visitors at the Theatre on Saturday afternoon.

The ventilation of the building is effected by a special system of fans, and has been carried out by Messrs. J. Keith, Blackman and Co., Ltd., of London.