

NEW EMPIRE PALACE, EDINBURGH.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

This magnificent theatre, to which the finishing decorative touches are now being given, will be opened on Monday. It has long been felt that the accommodation afforded by the little Gaiety was altogether insufficient for the demands made on it by the public, and the merging of this section of Mr Moss's great business into a limited concern was taken advantage of to provide Edinburgh with a recreative resort adequate for its yearly increasing wants. Everything in connection with the New Empire is on the grandest possible scale, and architecturally it will be a credit to the city. The contractors, Messrs Drysdale and Gilmour, have, with characteristic energy, got the structure ready in good time for the winter season, and the directors, by a lavish and well-directed expenditure, have given to the northern metropolis a temple of amusement of a character hitherto unknown in Scotland, and in point of beauty, luxury, and commodiousness not to be surpassed by any other edifice of the kind in the country. Situated in Nicolson-street, with convenient access from all parts, it stands on a site that has been continuously devoted to amusements for the best part of the century. Equestrian and musical entertainments alternated here for many a year. Here Paterson reared his Alhambra Theatre, which led to the building of the Princess's Theatre, now the property of the Salvation Army; here Henry Levy led the van with his Southminster Music Hall and Theatre; and here Price, Hengler, Newsome, and other managers had brilliant equestrian seasons, Newsome being the last occupant of the ground. Mr Moss purchased the property about three years ago, and only recently promoted the company that both acquired the site and took over his business at Chambers-street as a going concern. How prosperous the latter has been for the past decade our readers well know. The old building that cumbered the ground, being a simple hippodrome, was entirely demolished, and fresh foundations laid for the new structure. To provide ample exits and otherwise improve the main approaches, several adjacent properties, both back and front, were purchased, the whole forming a position of unequalled suitability and security. Upon this excellent vantage ground has been erected, from the designs of the eminent theatrical architect Mr Frank Matcham, of London, an edifice of magnificent proportions, perfect and unique in its general arrangements; and in its structural elegance and decorative grandeur one in which the dream of the ingenious designer must have reached its happiest consummation.

Through the courtesy of the managing director, Mr H. E. Moss, our representative had an early opportunity this week of going over the building, the various details of which were freely explained by Mr R. A. Briggs, the able clerk of works, under whose supervision the architect's plans have been so effectively carried through. The fabric is fireproof. All the promenades, passages, and staircases are wide and numerous, exits are duplicated and triplicated all over the house, and the outside walks that lead from the popular parts to the street are broad, roomy, and well lighted. Fire appliances are met with at every turn, and there are two sets of hydrants, with all the latest improvements, on every level, both before and behind the curtain. The principal entrance, a finely-proportioned vestibule, sparkling with gold and colour, strikes one at once with its ornate beauty, and here the elaborate scheme of decoration, which is entirely Indian throughout, begins with a richness and opulence that is continued only in brighter and more profuse variety as we proceed to the interior of the building itself. A mosaic flooring of characteristic device, panellings and mouldings of costly woods, and a stately marble staircase lead up to a spacious landing, where handsome mahogany double swing doors, glazed with bevelled plate glass and leaded panes, admit to a second hall, where the circle pay box is situated, and a crush landing, also floored with mosaics and superbly decorated. The centre of this sumptuous room is embellished with a greenery of Indian palms, with a waterfall behind, the cascades of spray falling into marble shell basins, the whole affording a delicious sense of coolness. The electric light is introduced here from a number of exquisitely-designed lustres and brackets. Two staircases, each with marble balustrades and brazen handrails, lead right and left to the grand saloon, a most magnificent apartment, with inlaid floor, elegantly carved woodwork, costly furnishings, and decorated in the highest style of art, a gorgeous design of Lucastra Walton forming an imposing feature. Both ceiling and frieze are brilliantly treated, and the whole enhanced by the introduction of several beautiful hand-painted subjects by Ballard. Diverging from this floor are three manager's rooms, commodious offices for secretary, cashier, and clerks, and other suitable business accommodation. Another spacious crush-room leads to two luxuriously appointed lounges, which in turn lead to the promenade, grand circle, and adjacent private and proscenium boxes, of which there are a number, all superbly furnished. Two wide and roomy corridors lead to the stalls, which are provided with separate exits leading directly to the street. The upper circle is certain to be popular. The seats here are agreeably roomy, and are upholstered in

terra cotta plush with padded backs. A spacious promenade runs round the whole extent of the circle, every point commanding an unbroken view of the stage. The gallery, which forms the third tier of the building, is substantially seated and comfortable to a degree. The orchestra has room for about forty instrumentalists, and this, we understand, will be about the strength of the band which Mr E. Bosanquet will direct. Looking round the interior, one is struck at once with its graceful and elegant appearance, and with the splendour and prodigality of the decorations. An elaborate and characteristic foundation is given for an imposing scheme of ornamentation by the fibrous plaster-work of the Carton Pierre Company, which is largely used throughout the building. Elephants' heads are introduced at various parts of the structure, and trophies of Indian armour and weapons ranged at intervals round the circle hold globes of electric light, which are thus intended to represent large Indian pearls. Of all the novelties introduced by the architect, none is more striking than the sliding roof over the centre of the auditorium. The house is heated throughout by hot water, and ventilation is well cared for. The large and lofty stage has been constructed to admit of the most elaborate and comprehensive ballet and spectacular effects, while, by an arrangement of folding screens, the proscenium opening can be enlarged or reduced at will. Also by an ingenious and simple adjustment, the orchestra, footlights, and whole woodwork of the stage can be removed, and a perfect circus ring disclosed, so that equestrian performances can be given in the afternoon, and the usual variety entertainment at night. Room for stabling and caravans is provided in the ample surrounding ground outside the theatre, and sloping pathways have been designed by the architect by which horses, elephants, camels, and other menagerie attractions can be conveyed to the stage or into the arena without any trouble. The dressing-rooms for the artistes are quite in keeping with the sumptuous character of the house. In conclusion, it may be said that Mr Moss has determined that the class of entertainment to be provided in this theatre will be in strict unison with the building; it shall be as refined as it is excellent. A conspicuous feature will be the prohibition of all that can be possibly construed into vulgarity, the fixed determination of the management being to raise, as much as possible, a class of entertainment which has made such rapid strides in public favour during the last few years. Mr Moss trusts that in the endeavour made to improve the tone of variety entertainments, the good wishes and support of all classes of society will be obtained.