

MR. CARNEGIE AND THE DRAMA.

Mr. Andrew Carnegie laid the memorial stone of the King's Theatre, Leven-street, Edinburgh, last Saturday. The new theatre is to be opened in December. In the spacious galleries and pit a large company assembled to witness the ceremony. The memorial stone was placed on the box space of the grand circle on the O.P. side, and here on an improvised platform were seated the chairman, Mr. R. C. Buchanan, and other directors of the Edinburgh Construction Company (Limited), the proprietors of the theatre, Dr. Carnegie, Provost Mackie, Leith, Councillor Cameron, and Dr. Hew Morrison.

The CHAIRMAN said they were met to witness a performance—an episode in one act—such as was seldom seen within the walls of a theatre. He felt proud that the aims to which his fellow-directors and himself had set themselves were within measurable distance of realisation. They had endeavoured to formulate a scheme whereby the capital of Scotland might have a theatre worthy of the best and the greatest dramatic traditions of the past. They meant to put all their energies into the work. It was a work on a high plane of action, an ambitious plane of action—action that sought to place within reach of the public of Edinburgh and of the many visitors to that beautiful city a continuous series of the dramatic works of the dramatists of the past, of the dramatists of the day, and of the dramatists yet unborn. It was perhaps natural that in such a theatre as that the feeling should be prompted that standing, as it did, in Scotland's capital, it was to be regarded as a National theatre. The plea for a National theatre had had the support of all men and women who acknowledged the high destiny of the drama, the late Sir Henry Irving being foremost among them. If that theatre might lay claim to the title "National," it would be because it would be run on the lines on which a National theatre would be run. The ideals would be all that constituted what was purest in art and elevating in entertainment.

A jar containing current coins and newspapers was then placed in the stone, which, on being lowered into position, was laid by Mr. Carnegie, who pronounced it "well and truly laid."

Mr. Carnegie then gave an address on the drama. He said:—It is some forty years since I was within the walls of a theatre in Edinburgh. Well do I remember that I then heard and saw one of the greatest dramatic treats I have ever had, and I have had many rare nights listening to good plays. Charles Webster played Sir Pertinax MacSycophant in Macklin's *Man of the World*. I hope it will be often repeated in this house. Many are the lessons for life I have received from the theatre. My first knowledge of Shakespeare came from attending a theatre and seeing his plays performed. I had not read his works. As telegraph messenger boy it was my duty to deliver telegrams to the manager of our Pittsburg theatre. We boys made it a practice to ask the gatekeeper if we might slip upstairs to the gallery, which privilege was accorded. In this way the works of Shakespeare were revealed to me.

What is the mission of the drama? We have the answer in the master's words—"both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." The highest and best are now grateful for knowing men and women of the actors' profession. In each of the two branches of our race we have had in our day one who stood out among his fellows. Our American, Joe Jefferson, was one of the sweetest and purest characters it has ever been my fortune to

know or hear of, a friend who did one good, a model of all the virtues. I do not know a gentler, purer, character than the delineator of Rip Van Winkle; and your Irving, crossing the ocean so often with him, it was my privilege to know him well. He, too, was in every respect a man whom all delighted to honour, and we have living in the profession to-day men and women of the same character whom it were invidious to mention. It is a far cry from burnt ears to Westminster Abbey, where Irving lies with Garrick, distinguished members of what is now recognised as an honoured profession. The theatre has come to stay, and it devolves upon us to avail ourselves of its tremendous power for good, and support it wherein it is worthy. Subventions to the drama and the opera are not favoured by our race: we know nothing of the subsidised theatre or opera, but since our Governments fail to support either, the duty appeals with greater force to the citizen. The best way for good people to aid and improve the theatre is to patronise it as often as a good play is produced, and avoid it when a bad one is offered. The appeal for aid to a bazaar rarely fails, I am told, on this side of the Atlantic. When a manager of a theatre like this—which is on Marlowe's lines, who laboured to exalt the stage—makes his appeal to the community on behalf of a standard good play, or of a pleasing spectacle for the children, such as has been taking New York by storm, the work of our talented fellow-countryman, Mr. Barrie, the man or woman of good position in Edinburgh should consider it a duty to patronise these and to induce others to do so. Purchasing a number of tickets and sending them to their poorer neighbours and their children is a sound exercise of generosity, a good use of surplus wealth. There is no pauperisation in this, no taint of charity. This is the legitimate reward which the manager has the right to expect at your hands. *Peter Pan* has just run continuously in New York the whole season, and the theatre was only closed owing to the summer heat. It is to start again when the heat is over.

I hope it will be so in Edinburgh, for it is a delight to children rarely equalled, and so with the cycle of Shakespearian plays promised at the inauguration of this theatre. If parents will see that their sons and daughters attend this cycle, more than one of their children is likely to look back in after life, as I do, to the revelation of Shakespeare as one of the controlling forces in his life for good. Ladies and gentlemen, I am greatly pleased to appear upon this occasion, because I have a note from the Lord Provost of Glasgow, stating that the proprietors and managers of this new theatre have done much for the elevation of the drama in Glasgow. Your sons and daughters who prefer to spend their shillings to see and hear plays of Shakespeare instead of squandering them upon lower things, are not likely to give you trouble in after life. Books laden with good fruit, which are sealed to the multitude, will have been opened to them, which cannot fail to affect their character and their tastes. I ask you then, citizens of Edinburgh, to consider the King's Theatre an institution worthy of your support, because it has the power, if sustained by you, to lead men and women into a higher atmosphere. I shall watch the future of this theatre with deepest interest. It is here somewhat in the nature of an experiment, but one which, as a fellow-burgess, I commend to all the good, generous, public-spirited citizens of the Metropolis. I lay this memorial stone, saying to my fellow-citizens of Edinburgh, in the words of Hamlet and Polonius, "See the players well bestowed." Polonius—"I will use them according to their desert." Hamlet—"Much better, man, use every man after his desert, and who shall scape whipping? Use them after your own honour and dignity."