

In a role which offers her broad opportunities for the exploitation of her art, Mrs. Fiske is undeniably one of the most charming liars our present stage has to offer.

She came to the Moore Theatre last night for a brief engagement in a new and very bright comedy by Harry James Smith named "Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh." And she was rich!

In the titular part of the piece she plays an ambitious woman who would enter smart society through the front door of the order. Her credentials thereto consist of a lorgnette, an ability to affect an afternoon tea-saucer manner of speech and a borrowed name that is handsomely parted in the middle.

She is Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh. Outside of that she is a clever faker who could out-talk the niftiest sort of book agent. When it comes to conversation, this social climber, so adroitly drawn by the dramatist, could sell a plain gold brick to a card sharp, take away his money and get him to lend her his railroad ticket to the nearest life-saving station.

In "Becky Sharp," Mrs. Fiske lied just for the imaginary fun of the thing. It is different with Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh. When she utters a pure and unadulterated fib she does it to the furtherance of her ambitions—which is not an excuse, but, nevertheless, an object.

#### She Lies Beautifully.

But she does lie so beautifully! And, thanks to Mr. Smith, with a clear-cut skill and craftiness that bring genuine results, in that Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh is permitted to shove her younger sister into the family in which she intended to shove her, even if against the will of the ancestors of the young man in question, and she herself, after once having been turned out of doors, is politely requested to remain.

It is understood that Mrs. Fiske's current vehicle represents Mr. Smith's—Mr. Harry James Smith's—first dramatic product. If that is so, one jump, as taken in "Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh" is sufficient to land him in the theatrical limelight, where he promises to be a figure for some time to come.

This piece is one of the most substantial comedy successes to fare this way during the season, and with such a distinguished and talented actress as Mrs. Fiske, and a supporting company of general excellence to interpret it, the work is raised to a treat of humor and really capable acting unsurpassed in all that have gone before in the last twelvemonth.

The idea of making a social impostor the basis of humorous treatment on the stage by no stretch of the imagination could be accepted as original; but Mr. Smith has found enough time in between his magazine articles to evolve a plot that is not only of recent origin but at the same moment is decidedly wholesome and amusing.

He has built his foundation with a fancy for soundness, and upon this his pen has nailed a structure composed of truly ludicrous situations and lines whose brilliance and smartness may be left unquestioned—except by those witty gentlemen who typewrite short paragraphs for the daily press. The dialogue of "Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh" is of the sort that scintillates and sparkles in intellectual splendor.

The comedy itself has many masterly touches. The sublime of the ridiculous is reached when, after Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh is dismissed by her host and hostess, their servants open fire and would appease her by praising the unfailing elixir which made Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh's—or rather, Della Sayles' father—notorious. The butler, for instance, ventures the opinion that his master and mistress have been a little hard. It is very funny.

#### Mrs. Fiske Delightful.

If the piece possessed any crudities of construction or dialogue in its incipency, they have been removed beyond the view of human eye by Mrs. Fiske—that is, all except a talkiness that at times becomes apparent but hardly tiresome.

Mrs. Fiske herself, as the irrepressible Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh, proved an unalloyed delight—which moves one to wonder if this actress is not quite as enjoyable in comedy as in drama. Above all other things, even the wondrous technique of her acting, Mrs. Fiske is intellectual and subtle.

Quite as much as ever, she showed these qualities in everything she did last night. With her, it seems to be a case of personality be hanged; she wins by force of sheer cleverness and the knowledge of how to act. As Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh, however, she comes the nearest to being boisterously funny of any character she has attempted within the writer's recollection.

Her assumed airs were very droll and always laughable, while her two manners of unbending talk, one for the household in which she was a guest, the other for the members of her immediate family, were at once beguiling and supremely common.

The actress still speaks with gatling-gun rapidity and precision, but she can be better understood because, in the present role, she is inclined to speak louder than on previous visits here.

#### Duncan Scores Hit.

Mrs. Fiske's support is splendid. This is particularly true of that part of it offered by Malcolm Duncan, who appears in the role of a garrulous salesman for a tombstone company in Hoboken and an old-time sweetheart of Della Sayles, now Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh. Duncan has but one chance and that in the second act, but he avails himself of it with a thoroughness that can not be denied. He has a great part and acts it to its very best possible advantage.

Florine Arnold makes Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh's mother one of the most ridiculous old fumps imaginable. She and the Mr. Hopkinson of Dallas Welford would have made an unbeatable pair. The only thing lacking in mother's vulgarity is that she neglects to slide across the parlor rug—but that is possibly an oversight on her part.

All of the other roles were exceptionally well taken. There is but one setting, and that, of course, is not only pretty, but extremely artistic.