"THE GONDOLIERS."

Wellingboro' Amateur Operatic Society's Successful Revival.

DUKE OF PLAZA-TORO (Mr. J. C. Gent). THE DUCHESS (Miss Dorothy Burkitt).

One of the many regretted effects of the outbreak of war in 1914 was that it nearly put an end to the Wellingborough Amateur Operatic Society, then at its zenith of fame. Not a few of its male members, and some of its officials, were called away from light opera to the stern business of war. From 1914 to 1919 the society lay dormant, but happily it has now been reawakened, and, with the acquisition of a number of new members, has been quickened into new life and interest.

In its early days the society gave "The Pirates of Penzance" and "Iolanthe"; then came "Pinafore," "The Gondoliers," "The Mikado," and, lastly, "The Yeoman of the Guard." Thus it will be seen that the society has so far confined its efforts to the works in which Gilbert and Sullivan were so successfully associated, and this season it was decided to repeat "The Gondoliers," a work with which it achieved such a striking success in 1912. Happily the proprietors of the Palace made it possible for the society to appear there, and also helped with the scenery, particularly in the second act.

The present list of officers and committee is as follows:—President, Lt.-Col. R. Rouse Orlebar, J.P.; vice-presidents, Lord Vaux of Harrowden, Dr. J. Arthur, Lt.-Col. J. W. Fisher, Mr. P. A. Fryer, M.A., Mr. G. Henson, C.A., Mr. J. Pendered, J.P., C.C., Mr. S. H. Wakeham and Mr. J. B. Whitworth, J.P., C.C.; committee, Messrs. H. Wykes Ashdowne, S. H. S. Cook, W. Morris, C. H. Oxland, and G. H. Woolston; hon. accompanist, Mrs. Alec Bird; hon. conductor, Mr. G. H. Woolston, A.R.C.O.; hon. stage manager, Mr. S. H. S. Cook; hon. secretary and treasurer, Mr. H. W. Ashdowne; and stage manager and producer, Mr. J. H. Taylor, of Leicester.

FIRST PERFORMANCE.

The first performance this week took place on Monday evening, and from the rise of the curtain in the first act to the fall at the end of the second act there was never a doubt as to what the result would be. It was very evident that great attention had been paid to rehearsal; everyone seemed thoroughly easy and at home in his or her part, the principals and chorus infusing into the opera that vim and vigour which has such an electrical effect upon the whole house.

Perhaps it will be of some interest to notice at the beginning those who figured both in the 1912 production and in this. First comes the name of Mr. Sidney Cook as Don Alhambra, and we could not wish for a better. As the Grand Inquisitor he invested the part with all its grandeur and dignity; propounding those Gilbertian marriage problems with a relish and a restrained chuckle that convulsed everyone. It was not surprising that he was encored for that irresistible lilting song "No possible doubt whatever." Next comes Mr. F. E. Plackett as Marco Palmieri, who won added laurels by his acting and singing. He had an easy rollicking style, was a typical gondolier, and was excruciatingly funny when figuring as one of the two kings in the "monarchy tempered with republican equality." In his vocal numbers he did well, but his great success was in "Take a pair of sparkling eyes." Mrs. Geoffrey Woolston as the captivating Gianetta brought to the part a most happy conception, and gave it a most natural interpretation, pleasing all with her rendering of "Kind sir you cannot have the heart," which was heartily encored. Mr. C. H. Oxland also figured well in his old part of Giorgio, and gave a good lead to the chorus.

Coming to the new principals and taking them in the order on the programme we note a grand acquisition in Mr. J. C. Gent as the Duke of Plaza-Toro, who as the fussy and impecunious Grandee of Spain, thoroughly justified his placing. The Gilbertian whimsicalities were happily hit off by Mr. Gent, and his dances and songs were very good. Mr. F. J. Brooks as Luiz, the Duke's attendant, had not a heavy part, but he was very meritorious, and was heard with much acceptance in the duet with Casilda. Mr. F. J. Thompson as Guiseppe had a part that made great demands, but these were fully met, and admirably responded to. Very good business was performed by Messrs. Plackett and Thompson, especially in the scene where they received their lessons in how

"To combine a pose imperious
With a demeanour nobly bland."

Mr. P. H. Reed as Antonio, who nicely sang "For the merriest fellows are we"; Mr. F. Blunt as Francisco, who gaily trolled "Good morrow pretty maiden"; and Mr. W. Morris as Annibale, all figured well as gondoliers.

As the Duchess of Plaza-Toro Miss Dorothy Burkitt at once established her position. She made up exceedingly well, assumed the grand manner, and sang "On the day that I was wedded" with a force that was irresistible, proving a valuable addition to the soloists. The part of Casilda found an excellent exponent in Miss Dorothea Cowper, whose vocal numbers proved most acceptable to all. Miss Phyllis Fisher undoubtedly scored as Tessa, having a part that suited her admirably in every way. Her singing of "When a merry maiden marries" was well worthy of the encore, her light foot and her treatment of the part being very pleasing. Mrs. J. M. Dorr as Fiametta (who nicely sang the opening air of welcome), Mrs. W. Holton, Junr., Miss D. M. Saxby as Giula were each good in their respective parts, whilst Miss V. M. Parrott as Ines fully entered into the dramatic situation when she has to tell how the Royal babe at its birth was changed for the son of the foster mother. The page and the drummer boys pleased everyone by the way they took their parts.

We have hinted that the Chorus played a conspicuous part in the success achieved, and praise must not be withheld from the members. They helped to form some very pretty pictures, and scored all along the line. Amongst the concerted pieces which met with marked success were "In a contemplative fashion" and "A Regular Royal Queen," which had to be repeated time after time. In Mr. Geoffrey Woolston the Society found an excellent hon. conductor, who kept the Chorus and Orchestra well in hand with such marked success.

A word of praise must be given for the beauty of the dresses, whilst the scenic effects were very charming.

The orchestra comprised the following:—Violins, Miss G. Wyldes, L.R.A.M. (leader), Miss A. Hornsey, Miss Croxen, and Mr. Adams; viola, Mr. A. Elks; 'cello, Mr. A. J. Palmer; double basses, Mr. W. Hornsey and Mr. W. Robertson; flute and piccolo, Mr. O. Nevett; clarionets, Mr. F. G. Newman and Mr. F. C. Gent; bassoon, Mr. H. C. Nevett; French horns, Mr. G. C. Nevett and Mr. A. Watts; cornets, Mr. A. E. Durdin and Mr. H. Coles; trombones, Mr. B. Smith and Mr. W. H. Earl; drums, etc., Mr. W. Calvert; pianist, Mrs. Alec Bird; organist, Mr. A. W. Woodcock.

THE CAST.

The dramatis personæ was as follows:—The Duke of Plaza-Toro (a Grandee of Spain), Mr. J. C. Gent; Luiz (his attendant), Mr. F. J. Brooks; Don Alhambra Del Bolero (the Grand Inquisitor), Mr. S. H. S. Cook; Marco Palmieri, Giuseppe Palmieri, Antonio, Francesco, Giorgio, and Annibale (Venetian gondoliers), Mr. F. E. Plackett, Mr. F. G. Thompson, Mr. R. H. Reed, Mr. F. Blunt, Mr. C. H. Oxland, and Mr. W. Morris; the Duchess of Plaza-Toro, Miss Dorothy Burkitt; Casilda (her daughter), Miss Dorothea Cowper; Gianetta, Tessa, Fiametta, Vittoria, and Giulia (contadine), Mrs. G. H. Woolston, Miss Phyllis Fisher, Mrs. J. M. Dorr, Mrs. W. Holton, jun., and Miss D. M. Saxby; Inez (the King's foster-mother), Miss V. M. Parrot. The chorus comprised the following:—Messrs. J. Barnes, W. J. Beale, Foster, J. W. Grainger, W. A. Hall, W. Hart, A. Kemp, F. Norman, G. R. Parsons, H. Taylor, H. Warwick, K. L. Warwick, D. G. Wright, J. J. Wright, K. E. Wright, R. A. Wright, and E. Wyldes; Misses E. Blunt, B. Burkitt, D. Clark, and G. E. Cook; Mrs. S. H. Cook; Misses E. Cox, K. Edwards, B. Gadsdon, G. E. Gent, M. E. Gent, and B. A. Goode; Mrs. A. B. Gray; Misses J. E. Henfrey, G. E. Hinds, K. M. Kennaheed, G. E. Knight, L. M. Martin, M. Osborne, E. R. Parsons, and D. M. Richardson; Mrs. E. Richardson; Misses D. M. Roper and M. A. Smith; Mrs. S. Tester; Misses M. Turnell, K. Ward, A. Warner, and D. M. Wyldes. The pages were Master E. A. Lewin and Master T. A. Lewin; and the drummer boy Master F. Ulyatt.

During the week the Society has repeated the performances with increased success, encores being demanded and pleasingly responded to each evening.

GIUSEPPE (Mr. F. G. Thompson). TESSA (Miss Phyllis Fisher). GIANETTA (Mrs. G. H. Woolston). MARCO (Mr. F. E. Plackett).

FRANCESCO (Mr. F. Blunt). GIULIA (Miss Saxby). FIAMETTA (Mrs. J. M. Dorr). VITTORIA (Mrs. W. Holton, jun.). ANTONIO (Mr. R. H. Reed).

MR. SIDNEY COOK AS "DON ALHAMBRA."

LUIZ (Mr. F. J. Brooks). CASILDA (Miss Dorothea Cowper).

Rev. C. L. Atkins.

Congregational Pastor's Farewell to his People.

PRESENTATION AT ROTHWELL.

Mr. T. Almond (making the presentation). Mr. J. Clow (chairman), and the Rev. C. L. Atkins.

After a successful and happy ministry of five years at Rothwell, the Rev. C. L. Atkins, is leaving to take charge of the church at Clarendon Park, Leicester. Presentations were made to him last week at farewell gatherings, both at Rothwell and at the Mission at Loddington.

PRESENTATION AT LODDINGTON.

Left to right: Mr. A. Whymant, the Rev. C. L. Atkins, Mr. Tear, Mr. J. Clow (Mission Secretary), Mr. Frisby, and Mr. Dawson.

SHIRE HORSES.

Annual Meeting of Thrapston and District Society.

The annual general meeting, as above, was held at the White Hart Hotel, Thrapston, on Tuesday afternoon, Mr. A. G. Lascelles, chairman of committee, presiding over a large attendance of members.

A hearty vote of thanks was accorded to the Right Hon. Lord Lilford, the retiring president.

Mr. W. M. Plevins, J.P., was unanimously elected president of the society and show for 1920; and it was resolved to ask Capt. George Belville, M.F.H., to accept the vice-presidency.

Messrs. Stanger, Nichols, and Jackson, the retiring members of the committee, were unanimously re-elected.

It was decided to hold a show for 1920, and the date was provisionally fixed for Wednesday, July 21st, and a number of subscriptions to the Show Fund were promised.

A vote of condolence with the relatives of the late Mr. Thos. Newton, an old and valued member of the society, was accorded.

Sir Albert Kemp, the Canadian Minister of Overseas Military Forces, is on his way to England to close up the Canadian military accounts.

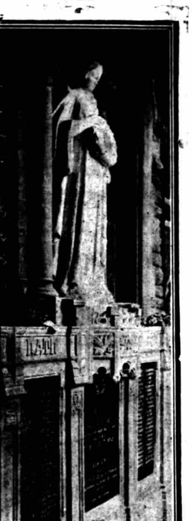
It is understood that the Ministry of Munitions is to be wound up forthwith.

Forty-three women magistrates have been appointed so far, of whom one has since died, stated Mr. Bonar Law in reply to a Parliamentary question yesterday. The death to which Mr. Bonar Law referred was that of Mrs. Humphry Ward.

Among the wills just proved is that of Mr. James Branch, of Canford, Etchingham-road, Finchley, managing director of James Branch and Sons, Limited, boot and shoe manufacturers, Bethnal Green-road, and Kingsthorpe, Northampton, Liberal M.P. for the Enfield Division of Middlesex 1906-10. His estate was sworn at £32,300, with net personalty £29,937.

WAR MEMORIAL.

Statue in Wellingborough Congregational Church.



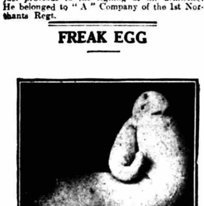
Our photo gives an excellent view of the beautiful War Memorial in the main porch of the Congregational Church, Wellingborough. "Peace" is depicted by a graceful statue, which is placed above an ornamental canopy and dado, the central panels of which bear the names of those belonging to the church who fell in the war. Last week the memorial was unveiled by the Rev. J. D. Jones, of Bournemouth. Messrs. Sharman and Moore are the architects.

POSTHUMOUS HONOUR.

Wellingboro' Young Soldier's Bravery

Mr. and Mrs. Fardon, of 14, Waterloo-road, Wellingborough, have just received the Military Medal which their son, the late Pte. T. Fardon, won for his bravery on the battlefield. Pte. Fardon was 22 years of age, and was killed just previous to the signing of the armistice. He belonged to "A" Company of the 1st Northants Regt.

FREAK EGG



The photograph reproduced above is of a freak egg, the like of which is rarely or has ever been seen before. It was laid by a hen belonging to Mr. Arthur Voss, of Senwick-road, Wellingborough, a short time ago.

COMIC OPERA.

"The Pirates of Penzance" at Earls Barton.

It is many a long day since such a bold step was taken to raise money in Earls Barton as one taken this week, when the well-known comic opera, "The Pirates of Penzance," by W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, was given by the Church Choral Society. The promoters are to be congratulated, and the funds of the War Memorial and the renovation of the Church Schools should be augmented to a considerable extent.

On Monday there was a crowded audience at the Public Hall, when the opera was given for the first time. It was rendered in a most creditable manner, and everything went off splendidly, the audience enjoying to the full this delightful work. The singing was first-class and the acting was excellent. The scenes—painted by Mr. C. J. Mapley— were magnificent, the two scenes "A rocky seashore on the coast of Cornwall" and "A ruined chapel by moonlight" being beautifully represented.

The parts were taken as follow:—Major-General Stanley, Mr. Fred Haynes; the Pirate King, Mr. Arthur White; Samuel (his Lieutenant), Mr. Horace White; James (a pirate), Mr. Wilfred Knight; Frederick (a pirate apprentice), Mr. Frank White; Sergeant of Police, Mr. Albert Noon; Mabel, Mrs. Sidney Robinson; Edith, Miss Florence White; Kate, Miss Gertie Ealey; Isabel, Miss Dorothy Buswell; Ruth (pirate maid-of-all-work), Miss Maggie Robinson. A chorus of girls, pirates, and police, numbering about 40, did their parts right well and very effectively.

The orchestra consisted of Messrs. S. W. Robinson, E. Barker, and W. Hardwick (violins), A. Knight (double bass), W. Charles (cornet), B. Cave (drum), and Miss F. Simpson (pianist). The music was well played, and the performance a great success. The conductor was Mr. C. J. Mapley, and he is to be congratulated on the success of the venture. The whole of the arrangements were made by Mr. C. J. Mapley for the Choral Society. The performance was repeated on Tuesday.

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