

AMATEUR ACTORS OF LONG AGO.



HARRY E. JEFFERSON



E. P. HAY



HOWARD S. NYMAN



MRS. H. C. SHERMAN



PROF. H. C. SHERMAN

AMATEURS OF YORE IN OPERATIC ROLES

Reminiscences of Memorable Performances Here Thirty-Five Years Ago.

It was more than thirty-five years ago that Henry E. Davis, afterward United States attorney for the District of Columbia, who was in Europe at the time, impressed by the sensation then being created by the melodious and satirical little masterpiece of Gilbert and Sullivan, secured and brought to Washington the score of "Pinafore." At the same time Miss Nannie Walter, daughter of the then distinguished Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, secured and brought over with her the libretto. Both were submitted to Prof. Harry C. Sherman, a leading musician of this city and organist of St. Aloysius Roman Catholic Church, where also Mrs. Sherman

was the contralto soloist in its then famous quartet.

So impressed with the novelty and beauty of the operetta were they all that but little time was lost in gathering and organizing a company of leading amateurs of Washington to produce it. This was during the fall and winter months of 1878.

The performance itself was given at what was then known as Ford's Opera House (now called the Majestic), at the intersection of Louisiana avenue, 9th and C streets northwest, the evening of January 23, 1879, for the benefit of the Central Free Dispensary.

Third Performance in This Country.

It was the third time the opera was presented in the United States, and the performance was a brilliant success. Even then, anticipating the spectacular effects aimed at by the New York Hippodrome of the present day, a nautical ballet was introduced during the first act by Prof. Sheldon, then a leading teacher of dancing, who had it danced by twelve of the children pupils of his school.

The cast for that performance included Mrs. L. K. Camp, as Josephine; Mrs. Henry C. Sherman, as Little Buttercup; Miss Lottie Swallow, as Cousin Hebe; W. H. Daniels, as Captain Corcoran; J. O. Pugh, as Ralph Rackstraw; Howard S. Nyman as Dick Deadeye; Ed. B. Hay, one of the most popular men who ever lived in Washington, as Sir Joseph Porter; K. C. R. C. S. Hein, as Bontecaris; J. Elliott, as Boatswain's Mate; and Master Harry Jefferson, son of Ralph Jefferson, himself a talented dramatic amateur, as midshipman.

H. E. Davis' Invaluable Assistance.

His thorough recollection of the opera as he had seen it presented in London enabled Mr. Davis to contribute invaluable assistance in making a success of the Washington production. He acted as stage manager for the first two performances, the second performance being given Saturday evening.

February 1, 1879, at Ford's Opera House, and like its predecessor, for the benefit of the Central Free Dispensary. Other presentations of the opera were given later at the National Theater, at Lincoln Hall, on the site where the Strand Theater now stands; in Frederick, and in Annapolis, Md. Prof. Harry C. Sherman was the musical director for all but a few of the later performances.

For the later performances some changes were made in the cast also. At different times Miss Eva Mills, then a brilliant soprano of Washington; Miss Sallie T. Ancona, Miss Georgiana McCann and Mrs. J. R. Fairlamb, wife of Prof. Fairlamb, also a prominent local musician and organist at the Assembly Presbyterian Church, took the part of Josephine; Mrs. Jeannie B. True, the part of Little Buttercup; and E. C. Hoff, who subsequently became the leading tenor of the Boston Ideal Opera Company, the part of Ralph Rackstraw, while famous Thad K. Sailer became stage manager and Dr. E. S. Kimball, musical director. On one occasion, for the benefit of the Botoma Boat Club, Dr. Kimball's son, now Judge Edward B. Kimball of the Municipal Court, then participated, and in the language of one of the reviewers of the day, was "as cute a midshipman as ever seen with any company."

Performances Never Surpassed.

There are those living today who will contend that these early productions and performances of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Pinafore" have never been surpassed, even by the professionals. Be that as it may, certainly no professional pre-

sentation of the opera in this city ever met with the cordial response of the public, or achieved a greater artistic and financial success than those of Washington's splendid amateurs "many years ago."

Prior to these performances of "Pinafore" a number of presentations of other operas were given by substantially the same organization here in the city, in Annapolis, Frederick, Hagerstown and other places.

Dignitaries Sit in Top Gallery.

May 22 following "Cox and Box" was repeated, with Offenbach's sparkling opera, "The Rose of Auvergne." So great was the demand for seats on this occasion that James G. Blaine, then Secretary of State, with his family and others prominent in social circles, having deferred purchasing seats, were obliged to sit in the top gallery, to form a part of the enthusiastic and delighted audience that witnessed the performance.

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at the National Theater, and the casts include such well known singers as Miss Eva Mills, Mrs. J. Remington Fairlamb, Mrs. Sallie P. Ancona, Miss Kauffmann and Miss Lucas, with Lenox Simpson, S. W. Keen and Herndon Morsell in the cast.

Mr. Morsell subsequently, upon the advice of the noted tenor, Tom Karl, became a prominent and popular member of the Boston Ideal, alternating with Mr. Karl in leading tenor roles. He was also a member of the Emma Abbott Opera Company and was leading tenor for a number of seasons with that popular prima donna, L. E. Ganley. The splendid basso finish choir director, was also identified with the amateur organization.

DUTY ON CHESAPEAKE BAY.

Revenue Cutter Window Relieves Apache During Repairs to Latter.

The revenue cutter Window, First Lieut. B. H. Camden commanding, which arrived at Baltimore Thursday from Galveston, and which has been designated to take the place of the cutter Apache in winter-cruising work on Chesapeake bay and its tributaries, while the Apache is undergoing repairs, will at once take up her duties. Lieut. Camden was at the department Friday in conference with the heads of the service regarding the work to be done by the Window.

It will probably be a month or longer before the work on the Apache is completed and in that time the Window will cruise over Chesapeake bay ready to give aid to any of the many small craft in service on it that may be in trouble through stranding or other causes. While the loss of the vessels aided by the cutter patrolling Chesapeake bay in the winter season will not amount to much in money, they often represent the total worldly wealth of their masters and owners, so that the service rendered by the cutter doing duty on the bay and its tributaries is of the greatest value.

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