"IOLANTHE."

CHELMSFORD AMATEURS' FINE EFFORT.

The Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society are again to be congratulated upon a success achieved in the production of "Iolanthe," another of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, which they are presenting to full houses at the County Theatre this week. From the merit of their previous performances of "H.M.S. Pinafore" and "The Gondoliers" it was only reasonable to anticipate that in "Iolanthe" the members of the Society would once more provide the public with a really enjoyable entertainment; and it is gratifying to be able to state that the high-water mark already reached is well maintained. The opera has been carefully studied, and it is produced under the skilful direction of Mr. H. Ashley Cooper, late of the D'Oyley Carte Opera Co., to whose wise management not a little of the success is due.

THE STORY.

"Iolanthe," or "The Peer and the Peri," may almost be described as a fairy story, though with the doings of the fairies are intertwined a love story and a good deal of fun at the expense of politicians—and particularly of hereditary politicians. Iolanthe, a beautiful fairy, has been banished from Fairyland for marrying a mortal, the Lord Chancellor, but after 25 years the Fairy Queen yields to the entreaties of her subjects and pardons her. Iolanthe has a son Strephon—half fairy, half mortal—who is in love with Phyllis, a ward in Chancery. Of would-be lovers this young lady has many including the Lord Chancellor himself and numerous Peers, led by Earls Mountararat and Tolloller. Trouble arises between Strephon and Phyllis, owing to the latter overhearing portions of a conversation between her lover and Iolanthe, whose youthful appearance belies his assertion that the lad is his mother. There seems a prospect that one or other of the Peers may win Phyllis, and the aid of the fairies is invoked by Strephon and his mother. The Queen, having threatened the Peers with dire penalties, sends Strephon to Parliament with power to end their cherished rights and even to throw the Peerage open to competitive examination.

In the second act Pte. Willis, 1st Grenadier Guards, is seen on sentry duty outside the Houses of Parliament, where he soliloquises in a most entertaining way on the humours of politics. The many tangles which arise are eventually unwoven by Iolanthe revealing herself to the Lord Chancellor as his wife, a step which, while smoothing the path of the young lovers, under the fairy law incurs the penalty of death for Iolanthe. The Queen's spear is raised to destroy her

The Queen's spear is raised to destroy her, but her hand is stayed by the announcement of the fairies that each of them has married a Peer. The fairy law undergoes alteration at the Lord Chancellor's suggestion; the Queen herself proposes to Pte. Willis; and the whole company, being suddenly blessed with wings, fly off to Fairyland.

THE CAST.

The Lord Chancellor ..... Mr. Tom Bellamy
The Earl of Mountararat...Mr. Cyril C. Last
The Earl Tolloller ..... Mr. Leonard Hayward
Private Willis (1st Grenadier Guards),
Mr. Cecil Booking
Strephon (an Arcadian Shepherd),
Mr. V. C. Spurgeon
The Queen of the Fairies...Miss Peggy Green
Iolanthe (a Fairy, Strephon's Mother),
Mrs. R. G. Beer
Celia, Leila, Fleta (Fairies), Mrs. A. J. Hobart, Mrs. T. Bellamy, Mrs. Ralph Catt.
Phyllis (an Arcadian Shepherdess and a Ward in Chancery) ..... Mrs. Cecil Booking
Chorus of Fairies, Earls, Viscounts, Barons, Marquises, etc.: Mesdames A. B. Barnes, C. Linn, W. Woodward; Misses E. M. Bradridge, L. N. Bradridge, U. Cannon, C. Cannon, A. E. Chisnell, D. E. Creasy, Q. Fewell, I. Fisher, E. F. Jacks, K. Last, C. Marks, E. Meager, E. S. Myall, W. R. L. Poole, M. Reason, M. Spalding; Messrs. B. W. Afford, C. Beasley, Ralph Catt, E. G. Coulter, G. Debnam, A. J. Hobart, H. Jackson, R. Jackson, G. N. Knight, R. G. Morrish, B. J. Myall, A. J. Noakes, E. T. Parfitt, H. N. Pullen, P. Rossell, R. J. Shoobridge, W. H. Tutt, H. A. Underhill, A. W. Ward, H. E. White.
Trainbearer: Mr. W. J. Beeton.

PRINCIPALS.

The first public performance—on Tuesday—went with a swing such as seldom marks a "first night" by an amateur company.

In the title role Mrs. R. G. Beer most successfully overcame the difficulties of an exacting part, giving a most effective representation of the delight experienced by the pardoned fairy, and her plaintive appeal to the Lord Chancellor before she finally revealed her identity. Her ballad, "He loves," was rendered in a most touching manner. Mrs. Cecil Bocking gave just the proper amount of vivacity to the part of Phyllis, being most natural in her love scenes with Strephon, and singing with charming effect the ballad, "For riches and rank I do not long," and also in the duet with her shepherd lover, "If we're weak enough to tarry." Miss Peggy Green, who made her mark in the earlier performances of the Society, was a truly royal Queen, and was very popular both in acting and singing. The encore accorded her for the song, "Oh, foolish fay," was thoroughly deserved. Of the three chief fairies, each of whom did well, Mrs. Hobart's acting was particularly pleasing.

Mr. Tom Bellamy was quite at home as the Lord Chancellor, his ponderous legal utterances being well delivered, and his songs "When I went to the Bar" and

Mr. Tom Bellamy was quite at home as the Lord Chancellor, his ponderous legal utterances being well delivered, and his songs, "When I went to the Bar" and "When you're lying awake," were heartily applauded. Mr. V. C. Spurgeon was an ardent lover, and also shone in his meetings with his fairy mother. The two Earls were admirably pourtrayed by Messrs. C. C. Last and L. Hayward. Mr. Cecil Booking as Pte. Willis could not have been more natural, and his song about "Every little boy and gal" earned him an undeniable encore.

CHORUS OF FAIRIES.

The chorus of fairies and peers was not the least effective part of the cast. They sang and danced with spirit, even if the gentlemen at first found their long flowing cloaks somewhat an encumbrance. The orchestra, skilfully conducted by Mr. G. E. Bower, hon. musical director of the Society, gave a spirited rendering of Sir Arthur Sullivan's music, and contributed in full measure to the success achieved. A special feature of the performance was the effectiveness of the dresses, and the scene when the whole company were grouped on the stage was brilliant.

The hon. scenery manager was Mr. E. G. Brown and the box office manager Mr. P. Butchard; while the duties of hon. secretary were efficiently discharged by Mr. R. J. Shoobridge. The following assisted as programme sellers, ushers, etc.: Mesdames E. Cullis, D. Jackson, C. H. Smith, Misses E. Brasher, M. V. Chisnell, C. Gunner, H. K. Patten, E. M. Sayers, and D. Ward; Messrs. J. Allen, E. W. Alston, A. B. Barnes, C. Coe, Hedley Fitch, F. Jeffreys, P. H. Last, S. L. Robinson, Alan Smith, and H. E. Ward.

At the dress rehearsal on Monday about 100 Scouts in uniform, representative of all the troops in the district, were present at the invitation of the Society.

Further evening performances will be given to-day (Friday) and to-morrow, with matinee to-morrow afternoon.