



● Peter Smith as Kipps in the Proper Gentleman number with Sixpence members.

Flaws marred first night

THE OPENING night of Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society's production of *Half A Sixpence* at the Civic Theatre on Monday night would have made still more of an impact if there hadn't been so many technical faults.

But if scene changes are being made more quickly and quietly and lighting cues have tightened up by now then *Half A Sixpence* could well be the society's best production since *Oliver* way back in May 1968.

For Ray Jeffery's production of this adaptation of H. G. Wells' story, *Kipps*, is lively and well cast right down to the small parts, while the show itself has one show-stopper, *Flash, Bang, Wallop!*, and some other attractive melodies.

As Arthur Kipps Peter Smith gives his best show ever for the society. His Kipps is engaging, lovable and utterly credible, while it's true he really hasn't got enough voice for *Flash, Bang, Wallop!*, the more reflective numbers like *She's Far Above Me* gain enormously from his gentle approach.

WARM

Margaret Burgess makes Ann exactly the sort of girl he would fall in love with. Her warm heart is occasionally overruled by her quick temper but at all times she is sufficiently contrasted to Kipps' other suitor the languid dogooder Helen Walsingham (Dianne Watson).

The teams of shop assistants (Russ Watson, Fred

Jones and Martin Burgess and Karen Munns, Audrey Hinton, Betty Worrall and Muriel Sampson) work together splendidly, while Joy Wallace, Joan Hann and Brian Tollisen, as the *creme de la creme* of 1900 Folkestone, condescend horribly.

Another superb performance comes from Stan Parsons as the Edwardian actor-cum-playwright, Chitterlow, both in terms of sheer voice and presence, while David Hurst gives to Mr Shalford the right blend of obsequiousness and bully for a prosperous draper.