

# "MISS HOOK OF HOLLAND."

## FINE PERFORMANCES BY CHELMSFORD OPERATIC SOCIETY.

After lying dormant for a season, the Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society embarked on a bold enterprise this year in engaging the fine Regent Theatre for a week's performances of that delightful and amusing Dutch comedy "Miss Hook of Holland." It is too early yet to say whether the efforts of the Society will receive their due reward, but the opening night justifies one in predicting that they will, and certainly in saying that they ought. Of course there were slips on Monday evening incidental to a first night performance, but they were trivial, and did not detract from what was really a first-class entertainment. A very good start was made at the beginning, and the whole performance went with a fine swing. The general effect conveyed the impression of careful preparation and intelligent study. There were several familiar faces in the cast, some of whom have, in previous seasons, established themselves as favourites among the patrons of the Society. There were also some new to the work, but they gave such a good account of themselves that it was difficult to realise they were coming forward for the first time in this particular line. Those who go back to the last time the Society were before the public, when they produced "The Yeoman of the Guard" will recollect that Miss Rose Rowbotham and Mr. E. T. Parfitt achieved considerable triumph in their respective roles; but improvement was noted in their work in "Miss Hook of Holland." Miss Rowbotham's voice is stronger, and carries with greater effect; she sang charmingly, and displayed a true insight into what was required in the character of Sally (Miss Hook of Holland), and well deserved the encores insisted upon by the very appreciative audience. There would be a difficulty in singling out any particular item of hers when all were so good. Mr. Parfitt caused great hilarity by his clever and amusing impersonation of Mr. Hook, the wealthy liquor distiller; he was most realistic in the scene which followed his visit to the "cellar," and was particularly good in portraying the effects thereof. The house continually rang with laughter during the singing of the solo "The violoncello," when he mimicked the playing of that instrument, at one moment assuming the comical gravity associated sometimes with those who have imbibed not wisely but too well, and the next moment breaking out into smiles. It was no wonder that the reception of this contribution to the programme was great. Mr. Gerald Debnam, a new comer, we believe, but a prime favourite at Chelmsford, scored heavily with the audience as Simon Slinks, the loafer and workshy. He was broadly humorous, and eminently successful in his characterisation of the personage he had to represent. Some topical allusions he brought in during the evening, with reference to the new loop road and the sewer constructions at Chelmsford, tickled the audience immensely. Mrs. C. L. Bocking has on several previous occasions occupied a prominent place in the cast, and as Mina, maid to Miss Hook, she fully maintained the reputation she has gained. She was especially good in the song "A pretty pink petty from Peter," which she rendered with vivacity and charm, and she had to yield to a persistent demand for a repetition. Mr. Jack Myall, as Capt. Adrian Paap, was the dashing officer of the Mounted Artillery, at first in love with Sally but who, his suit being unsuccessful, found consolation in the charms of Freda Voos, the part admirably borne by Mrs. W. R. Catt. The role of Bandmaster Van Vuyt, with whom Sally is in love, and for whom she schemes to further her interest, was played with conspicuous success by Mr. Reginald Jackson, while Mr. V. C. Spurgeon was an effective foreman of the distillery. Minor parts were undertaken by Miss Peggy Green, Miss C. G. Marks, Miss D. L. Mann, Mr. H. B. White, Mr. Hedley Fitch, and Mr. J. W. Hawkes, and all contributed their share to the success of the show.

Some very fine work was done by the chorus from start to finish. The various members entered with zest into the spirit and fun of the comedy, and their efforts were quite as keenly appreciated as any other part of the performance. They gave a particularly good rendering of "Soldiers of Netherlands," in which the changing formations of the groups on the stage had a very happy and pleasing effect.

The post of honorary musical director was held by Mr. Frederick Cole, who has worked the Society up to a high state of efficiency. Mr. Cole is a music enthusiast; since he came to Chelmsford but a comparatively short time ago he has lost no opportunity of giving his services in the cause of music in the borough. His conducting helped materially to keep everyone up to the mark, and congratulations were due to him for the immense amount of care and trouble he has taken and the time he must have devoted to the training of those under his charge. The very pretty dances which occurred all through the performance were arranged by Miss Madge Macklin. A goodly measure of praise should be bestowed upon one individual—the hon. secretary—a post held by Mr. W. H. Tutt. His work does not come into the limelight, but it is absolutely essential to the efficient and smooth working of the Society, and thanks are due to him for his share in the very meritorious accomplishment of the Society.