

St. Columba's Club Drama Group Gives Entertainment

A VARIED programme of comedy and drama was presented at St. Columba's Club recently by the St. Columba's Players under the title of "The Drama Group Entertains."

Those taking part in the programme gave the audience something to think about, in addition to fulfilling the requirements of the title, by giving brief excerpts from various productions over the past few years without identifying them. The audience had to supply all the information asked for by the producer, Harold Dockrill, and, on the whole, they succeeded admirably. A short sketch, written by the producer, was also staged and this amusing episode was well received.

The casts included Grace Dockrill, Gwen Green, Marina Hamilton, Dorothy Graham, Geoff Gillvray, Jean and Ian Male, Margaret and Ken Allen, John Chatham and Hazel Layton. Effects were by Michael Cosgrove. All connected with the presentation were thanked by the Chairman (Rev. A. S. Cooper) and, after refreshments, the audience watched the Club's table tennis semi-finals and finals. The outcome of these was a new singles champion in the hon. treasurer, Geoff Gillvray, who won his set against Jean Male 21-7, 21-19.

A farewell was taken of popular members, Joyce and Less Thurston, and their baby daughter, Jane, prior to their departure to the U.S.A.

Mr. Cooper, in giving them the Club's sincere wishes for a safe journey, commented on their long and valued association with the Club and thanked them for all they had done in the past. Les Thurston, in reply, said that the Club meant a great deal to them and they had made many good friends through it. They looked forward to seeing everyone again on their return.

TALK ON TEACHING THE BLIND

"The Work of a Home-Teacher for the Blind" was described in a talk at the Club recently by Miss Dora Williams. Miss Williams, who is fully-trained, said that work with blind people started as long ago as 1834, at the instigation of Lord Shaftesbury, when it was mainly to enable the blind to read their Bibles. Since those days, the work had expanded tremendously and, with trained workers, better organisation and the benefits of modern medical science, great progress had been made.

Miss Williams stressed that the first and perhaps greatest obstacle which had to be overcome was the lack of self-confidence which came with blindness. The home-teacher had to gain the person's confidence too and, if possible, come to be treated as one of the family. The less formality there was about the teaching the better.

She went on to speak of the work done for younger blind people in Rehabilitation Centres where they were taught trades. Once fitted for work in the outside world there was sometimes a frustrating and often depressing wait for a vacancy to turn up. It was at this stage that a friend visitor could be of infinite value as a source of encouragement.

Miss Williams spoke of many other aspects of her work and concluded by telling some amusing stories illustrating the cheerfulness of the blind members of the community. The Rev. A. S. Cooper (Chairman) thanked Miss Williams, a member of the Club, for her excellent talk.

"Puppet Playtime" at St. Columba's Club

"Puppet Playtime" was presented at St. Columba's Club by Mr. Spalding of "Model Theatrecraft." Strictly speaking it was not a marionette show but something which was quite new to the club members. The "puppets" were flat figures which moved on and off the miniature stage but did not possess the moveable limbs of marionettes. The novelty was continued in the "playtime" or, to be more precise, "panto-time." Six club members assisted back-stage by reading the parts of the characters who were appearing on-stage. The pantomime "Cinderella" was in three acts and the "back-stage cast" consisted of Pam Arnott as "Cinders", Geoff Gillvray and Ian Male as the Ugly Sisters, Les Thurston as the Prince, Dulcie Linton as Fairy Godmother and Jean Male as the Prince's messenger.

After the performance Mr. Spalding gave a brief talk about this "new" manner of stage presentation which, he said, had been started by his father prior to the first World War. He emphasised the important part lighting played in creating the right atmosphere in his productions and gave demonstrations to prove his point. In addition to pantomimes Mr. Spalding had adapted plays and scenes from operas which were best presented on the larger stages which he had built.

After answering several questions, Mr. Spalding was thanked by the Chairman (Rev. A. S. Cooper) for his production and for his offer, which was accepted later, to explain the workings back-stage to club members.

The final of the club's table tennis tournament was played off, after refreshments, between Rev. A. S. Cooper and Ian Male. The club secretary emerged as winner with the scores 21-10, 15-21, 21-10.

EVENING OF COSMIC CAPERS

“Geophysical Jerks” at St. Columba’s Club

St. Columba’s Club members were taken on a flight of fantasy recently in a programme produced by their “Scientific Research Unit” and entitled “Geophysical Jerks.”

This title gave the audience an idea of what the producers, Ian Male and Jimmy Hamilton, had in mind when they were commissioned for the job of arranging a satirical evening of cosmic capers! The International-Geophysical Year came in for a fair amount of good-natured punishment during the show, which owed a lot to the ingenious lighting and sound effects produced by “Professor” Michael Cosgrove.

The opening sketch concerned the preparations of a group of scientists from assorted countries for an expedition to discover more oceanographic data for the I.G.Y. Their equipment for this task included a box camera and candles (for underwater photography), jam jars (for samples of sea), a tape measure (for measuring ocean depths) and a comb to smooth out the waves.

Naturally the Sputniks were much to the fore and the programme included an interview with a Soviet scientist, “Serge Suitsky” (played by Ken Allen), who had been concerned with the launchings. Although little information of value was extracted from him—due partly, no doubt, to his misinterpretation of the questions—it proved a highly amusing episode thanks to the ingenuity of the authors, Ken and Margaret Allen.

MARTIAN’S CRACKED SAUCER.

The prospective travellers for the first manned satellite were interviewed next by “Dr.” Geoffrey Gillray, who had no hesitation in giving “Miss Marilyn Mansfield” (Marina Hamilton) a “pass” and rejecting a brilliant young scientist who had all the requisite qualifications—or so it seemed! Another traveller was included in the party and with his (or her!) arrival the programme started on its flight into fantasy, for the newcomer turned out to be a Martian whose saucer had been cracked and he (or she!) wanted a lift home!

The actual departure of the satellite was next on the bill, with the stage occupied on the one side by the space travellers and on the other by the commentator. Lighting and effects became more important than dialogue at this point and this state of affairs remained throughout the next sketch, which involved a “Journey into Time,” where—or when—it was discovered that the inhabitants of the year 3057 A.D. were invisible! The efforts of two scientists to obtain proof of their ability to travel through Time and to convince the I.G.Y. committee of the fact, formed the basis of this episode.

The programme was interrupted from time to time by an archaeologist from Australia (H. N. Woodley) who was tunnelling his way to England—his appearances being made through the floor of the stage! The narration throughout was spoken by “Professor” Albert S. Cooper who, after the cast had sung the closing chorus, “Everything’s Up-to-Date in St. Columba’s,” thanked all who had taken part in “Geophysical Jerks.” Other members of the cast included Jean Male, Harold Dockrill and the producers.

ST. COLUMBA’S ENJOY GWEN GREEN SHOW

ON Wednesday night at St. Columba’s Club, Gwen Green presented her programme “Gwen’s Delight at 8.” Whatever “teething troubles” may have to some extent spoiled her “delight” prior to putting on the show, the delight of the audience must have been some compensation.

A varied programme included sketches and competitions and a quiz, which was presented by Les Thurston. The latter was enjoyed particularly, as the problems posed on the screen were hardly the most difficult one could devise. Despite this, however, there was only one person who gained 100 per cent. with the answers!

The competitions were also varied, and Jean Parkinson had obviously given them considerable thought. The final outcome was a well deserved prize for Brian Ellis, who had earlier raised a laugh with some humorous poetry reading.

A charade was presented by Dorothy, Jean and Ian Male, with the assistance of Marina and Jimmie Hamilton, and the audience did well to spot the solution. The charade was presented in the form of three sketches which were designed to be amusing, apart from thought-provoking.

Gwen Green herself presented the other sketch, a short time with “The Awful Child.” She was assisted by Mrs. West and showed an insight into the “goings-on” of the child which must surely have come from personal experiences!

The Chairman (the Rev. A. S. Cooper) thanked Mrs. Green and all who had taken part in the programme. Next week, Miss E. Ellis will give a talk on “Housing Problems of Today.”

ENTERTAINING "SILVER JUBILEE"

St. Columba's Club Landmark

A SILVER JUBILEE was celebrated at St. Columba's Club on Wednesday when the 25th edition of the "Members Night" variety show was presented by Les Thurston and Ian Male. Some of the highlights from past shows made a welcome re-appearance in a request programme which, according to remarks overheard in the audience, was thought by many to be "the best ever."

After the opening chorus Geoff Gillyray gave one of his popular North Country monologues. "Albert and the Lion," and was followed by Dorothy Male and Gilbert Ash in "Old Tyme Duets." Their rendering of "Sweet and Low," "Robin Adair" and "Men of Harlech" had to be seen and heard to be believed and Jane van Auken was to be congratulated on her piano accompaniments.

Joyce and Les Thurston, assisted by Ian Male, next presented "Ron and Ethel" in another comedy sketch (written by Les Thurston), which was well received. "Fire Alarm" was Harold Dockrill's main contribution to the show and this depicted the vain pleadings of a lady (Grace Dockrill) with a fire on her hands, trying to persuade a Robb Wilton-type of fire brigade that some degree of urgency was desirable.

Next on the bill came "The Eno's Sisters and Ping Crosby," in the persons of Les, Ian and Jean Male. The voices which appeared to emanate from these three bore a striking resemblance to those of a famous American female harmony group and the old "Groaner" himself. The "illusion" was increased by the wearing apparel of those concerned, but even so there were those in the audience who were convinced that it was all done with a gramophone record and miming!

"SCOTS WHA HA'E" PROGRAMME AT ST. COLUMBA'S CLUB

"SCOTS WHA HA'E" was the title of the programme given at St. Columba's Club by the Club's members from north of the border and by the University Strathspey and Reel Club.

The first item on the bill was "Auld Scots Sangs" by the "Clan Columbia" and this was followed by the first of two displays by the Reel Club. Two solos by members of the latter were "The Sword Dance" and "Flora MacDonald's Fancy," and these preceded "The New Scotland Strathspey," A monologue, "Margaret Pow at the Pictures," by Ann Syme, was well received, and then came two songs by Nancy Russell, "Ilka blade o' grass" and "Tam Glen" by Burns.

"Interior Desecrators," a sketch by Jamie Hamilton, was presented by the "Deoch and Doris Diddlers," and this was followed by Hugh Arnott's "Bib Blow" on the bagpipes. Finally another dancing display by the Reel Club which included a jig "Waverley," a Highland Dance for three ladies, a solo, "The Highland Fling," and the popular "Hebredean Weaving" dance, brought an enjoyable programme to an end.

Continuity and narration was by Mrs. R. Sime, the accompanist was Mrs. Roe, and lighting effects were by Michael MacCosgrove.

All who took part were thanked by the Chairman (Rev. A. S. Cooper).

ODD MAN OUT.

Gwen Green and Dorothy Male next made their mark in this all-comedy show with "Ada and Arriet." They succeeded with the help of Mrs. West and a, not surprisingly, nearly silent Geoff Gillyray, in covering more topics of conversation in ten minutes than most people could manage in a whole evening. They were, apparently, supposed to be shopping! Geoff made up for his enforced silence with another popular monologue and then came "The Guy Fawkes Story."

"The authentic news-reel version of the Gunpower Plot which has only come to light recently," was how this documentary epic was described. Effects man, Michael Cosgrove, operated the magic lantern, which had a deliberate pronounced "flicker" and projected such sub-titles as "Thou hast had thy chips," "Light ye blue touch paper," and "End of Reel One, etc., or, to the screen. Gilbert Ash provided suitable piano accompaniments to the love scenes, fights and villainous activities of the players, Jean Male and Messrs. Thurston, Hamilton, Male, Gillyray and Dockrill.

After the closing chorus the Chairman (Rev. A. S. Cooper) thanked all who had taken part in the silver jubilee members' night.

"THINGS TO COME?" PROGRAMME AT ST. COLUMBA'S CLUB

"THINGS TO COME?" concluded the coming-of-age of the popular "Members' Night" variety programmes at St. Columba's Club last Wednesday. With commercial television as their theme for satire, producers Jean Parkinson and Les Thurston ensured the success of this 21st edition.

With "Demon Andrews" (Les Thurston) as Chairman, "viewers" saw "What's My Line?" in which the panel, consisting of Grace Dockrill, Jean Parkinson, Joyce Thurston and Ian Male failed to guess the occupation of "Mr. Ivor Brush"—a chimney sweep—played by Harold Dockrill and succeeded with "Miss Potts"—a sagger-maker's bottom-knocker!—played by Jean Male.

"Television News Reel" was next with an anti-Communist investigation in Washington, the gentleman undergoing cross-examination transpiring to be the British Ambassador. An interview with "Mrs. Lily Lightfoot" (Jean Male), who had just beaten the four-minute mile (with the aid of a small motor-driven propeller!), preceded an extract from the trial of "Madame Barbleu" in Paris, charged with the murder of six husbands. Les Thurston, as the lady in question, failed to convince the Public Prosecutor of his (her) innocence and had to poison him too.

ADVERTISING

Harold Dockrill and Les Thurston next took part in an opera, advertising a brand of shaving cream, and this was followed by an interlude of lantern slides advertising the beauty of Cambridge. The fact that the Cam. bore more resemblance to the Seine and "Grassy Corner," "Ditton Docks," "Clayhithe," etc., were more than reminiscent of famous Continental beauty spots only added to the fun.

Under the chairmanship of Jean Parkinson, an "Animal, Vegetable or Mineral" panel were soon using every opportunity to advertise commodities which, in their opinion, were directly descended from the archaeological specimens they were identifying. "Miss Ann Teek" and "Prof. Archie Logical" were among the "experts" who were played by Joyce Thurston, Jean Male, Grace and Harold Dockrill.

Finally, there was a sketch in three scenes portraying the efforts of a drama producer, "Percy Promptem," to get his cast on top line for opening night. The tender love scene between Clarissa and Algernon could hardly have been "acted" with less feeling or more prompting, and the result was good comedy. The producer was, apparently, suffering from "shallow sleep," but a dose of "Ovalicks" soon made him see things in a new light and the acting on the opening night was, in his eyes, superb. The strange thing was that in fact it was even worse than at the rehearsal! Harold Dockrill, Jean and Ian Male, Joyce Thurston and Grace Dockrill took part in the sketch, and Michael Cosgrove was "effects man" throughout.

Rev. A. S. Cooper (chairman) thanked the producers and all who had taken part in "Things to Come?"

"MYSTERY AT GREENFINGERS"

St. Columba's Players' Production

THAT "Drama Night" at St. Columba's Club is a major attraction in the Club's programme is undeniable. For their recent presentation the St. Columba's Players made doubly sure of a successful evening by choosing a comedy-thriller, "Mystery at Greenfingers," which was a three act play from the pen of J. B. Priestley, specially written as a test-piece for amateur dramatic societies.

The action of the play takes place in an hotel in the Peak District where some members of the staff have arrived to get things ship-shape prior to the hotel's opening. Heavy snowstorms cut the Greenfingers Palace Hotel off from the outside world but not before a certain Miss Tracey arrives with a travelling companion, Mrs. Jerrigan, and informs Keith Henley, the assistant manager that he must give them a night's shelter. He agrees to do so and later, when everyone is either thinking of turning in or has already done so, three sharp reports are heard and, on investigation, Mrs. Jerrigan appears to have vanished.

Fortunately—or so he thinks—the hotel's private detective is present, and on the following morning Mr. Robert Crowther begins his unenviable task, having made little headway on the night of the disappearance. The hotel staff, consisting of the staff-manageress, Mrs. Heaton, games hostess Helen Tennant, Jordan the chef, Fred the batman, Sally and Clara the maids and Edna Sandars the secretary, are hardly as co-operative as they might be and Crowther's blustering manner only makes things worse for himself. One by one he questions them and the evidence he uncovers only seems to make the case more baffling still.

EXCELLENT PERFORMANCES.

The eccentric but shrewd Miss Tracey, however, makes more headway with her investigations and, with the help of "that sharp, young woman," Edna Sandars, she unravels the real "mystery at Greenfingers." The vanished Mrs. Jerrigan is discovered to be Miss Tracey herself and the questioning of the staff is directed towards discovering the agents of a drug traffic organisation in the hotel syndicate.

As Miss Tracey, Grace Dockrill gave an excellent performance while Geoff Gilloray made an admirable foil for her as the somewhat "dim" detective, Crowther, who finally ends up horizontal as a result of a right hook from Fred.

The sophisticated secretary who had an answer for everything, was played with confidence and humour by Jean Male. Dorothy Graham and "Steve" Stacey as Helen Tennant and Mrs. Heaton both gave realism to their parts. The chef, Arnold Jordan, who alternates between exasperation and despondency, was played by John Chatham and the smooth-talking barman by Ian Male. Brian Ellis was the worried young assistant manager.

The play was produced by Harold Dockrill and the backstage helpers were Michael Cosgrave and Hazel Layton. All who took part in the production were thanked on behalf of a full house by the chairman (Rev. A. S. Cooper) who congratulated the players on their presentation.