

"LAST CHANCE" IS WAGGONLOAD OF FUN

Chelmsford Society and Straight Plays

PUBLIC support for Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society's presentation of "Waggonload O' Monkeys," this week at the Regent Theatre, will decide the Society's attitude towards straight plays in the future.

Should the support be insufficient this type of show is likely to be "out."

The new President, Mr. David Smith, made this clear from the stage to a large audience after the first night on Monday.

Mr. Smith said there were too many people in the town who tended to criticise lack of entertainment, but who did not support the things that were done.

He thought Chelmsford was lucky to have such people as those in the cast that night—people willing to give up their time to entertain others.

BACK AGAIN

"Waggonload o' Monkeys" is a sequel to the Society's Spring production, R. F. Delderfield's "Worm's Eye View," and the two familiar characters, Cockney Sam Porter and Taffy reappear. It centres on their attempts to sell a down and out pub, "The Last Chance," on a commission basis.

The inimitable Stan Stewart again takes the role of Porter in a riotous performance. With spiv-like efficiency he "diddles," and generally dominates the play. In fact so persuasive is he that one can imagine him selling the very curtains from the stage to the front row of the stalls.

THE LANDLORD

Landlord of "The Last Chance"—which the villagers of Sloggers Bottom seem unwilling to patronise—is played by David Flatt, who produces a most convincing North Country accent, and has a particular eye to getting his money's worth. Assisting him behind the bar is his attractive daughter, Evie, delightfully acted by Patricia Harrison.

When Porter arrives on the scene he quickly starts things moving, ably assisted by Taffy, this time played by Gwyn Jones, and very well played, too. Poor Taffy! He gets into the most awkward situations and in them looks as awkward as anyone could wish.

In his attempt to sell the tavern, Porter enlists the aid of an aged yokel, by the name of "Scrumpy" Tapscott. F. Arthur Jeffries is really wonderful in this role; his bowed legs and cracked voice alone makes him a most effective character.

Others roped in by Porter to aid the sale include an admirer of Evie's (Stan Parsons), a rather languid gentleman of the "Oh, I say old man," school, and Doreen Hurrell, in the role of a London barmaid.

SOLD

A buyer is eventually found and he turns out to be an old flame of Evie's. Played by Mike Cornell, he divides his time between negotiating for "The Last Chance" and courting the landlord's daughter.

Kathleen Newell, as a delightful old spinster, drifts in and out of the plot—most of the time in consultation by phone with her book

something or other, suitably attired in grey suit, bowler hat, and furled umbrella.

Veteran producer Robert Vernon puts on the show effectively. Although slow to warm up on the opening night, the humorous situations were effectively put over, with the cast generally speaking well inside their parts.

Back-stage personnel comprise: Mr. William Broadly, prompter; Mrs. Andrews, call girl; Mr. H. Bache, stage-manager and properties, assisted by Mr. S. Jackman, Miss H. Passmore, and Mr. D. Ann; Mr. Frank Page, perquisite. Stage manager and chief electrician (for Regent Theatre), Mr. R. Burton.

There is a performance to-night (Friday), and a matinee and evening performance to-morrow.