

What A Joke to Play On 'The Players'!



Miss Bessie Abbott, the famous American prima donna, in an heroic role.

The interesting problem of how far a club member ought to go when he feels his club needs "livening up" has just been answered for Arnold Daly, the very well-known actor. Mr. Daly, consumed by philanthropic zeal, he says, selected "The Players" the most famous theatrical club in the world, for his experiment. Aided and abetted by Miss Bessie Abbott, one of the greatest of American grand opera prima donnas, he did his best.

Now Mr. Daly is no longer a member of "The Players." The experiment, otherwise was successful.

For months its details have been locked in the breasts of the indignantly enlivened members of the club. Now they have just leaked out.

Here they are. It is a "pipe night" at "The Players" on a cold night of last January.

A Players' Club "Pipe Night" is equivalent to a "Snoker" at any other club. The Players' Club, it must be said again, is without any question the most distinguished, the most sedate, the most sensitive, and, according to some, the most serious theatrical organization in the country. Although primarily a theatrical society, the membership is made up largely of individuals outside the profession.

It was founded years ago by the late Edwin Booth. The clubhouse was presented by Edwin Booth. Material reminders of the great tragedian are embodied in a thousand and one souvenirs scattered throughout the clubhouse.

Only on rare occasions have its portals been crossed by the fairy footsteps of woman. Never has a woman been allowed to remain after 6 in the afternoon.

What it means to be a member of this unique organization may perhaps best be described in the words of Frank P. Mackay, one of the veteran members of the club and a director. Some months ago Richard Barry, in a magazine article, declared that "very few actors have brains enough to think for themselves or to feel their parts."

Barry was a member of the Players'. Shades of Edwin Booth! Expulsion from the club was the very least that he could expect after such a blasphemy, and he got it. He brought legal proceedings for reinstatement, and the court ordered his reinstatement.

It was then that Mr. Mackay was moved to utter comment. "Association in the Players' Club," he said, "means a mental condition—that condition has been lost to Mr. Barry."

But to return to the eventful "Pipe Night" last January. Imagine the scene in this distinguished clubhouse.

In the chair is Arnold Daly, the actor.

Actor Arnold Daly Did It. Famous Prima Donna Bessie Abbott Aided Him-- But Wouldn't You Have Thought ACTORS Would Have Known She Wasn't a Man?

Grand Opera Prima Donna Bessie Abbott as She Looks in Men's Clothes. Not the Costume She Wore at "The Players," but Just as Charming.

All around the spacious dining chamber recline members inhaling the proceedings soporifically.

From his rostrum the chairman announces the pleasure of introducing Signor Bettino Abotto, "a talented female impersonator, who possessing a natural tenor voice, also sings a high soprano."

From the back of the room, a slight individual, attired in regulation evening clothes, rises to respond to the invitation.

"Signor Bettino Abotto," introduces the chairman.

Making his way through the members, the female impersonator approaches the piano and renders an operatic selection like a prima donna. To any one but a member of the Players' Club the fact that the singer's clothing sits rather tight in the narrows, would be too apparent to escape attention.

"A remarkable voice!" comments a nonagenarian actor to an octogenarian doctor.

"Ought to have been a woman," replies the doctor. Similar comments are heard throughout the audience.

A vote of thanks is moved for Signor Abotto, and the Signor takes his place again, and is roundly congratulated on his wonderful performance.

Later in the evening Signor Abotto is prevailed upon to sing again. His white shirt front is now a little wilted. It is quite an ordeal to sing for the first time before such a distinguished audience in such a distinguished edifice.

One or two doctors in the audience begin to grow incredulous. Whispers are heard throughout the audience. The fact that the Signor is accompanied by Waldo Story, who achieved fame as the husband of Bessie Abbott, naturally brings the name of the great American prima donna into the conversation.

Suddenly a resemblance between the voice of the Signor and that of Bessie Abbott is suggested, and finally the startling discovery is made that the Signor's name, "Bettino Abotto," is not so very different from that of Bessie Abbott.

Shades of Edwin Booth! Consternation begins to crop out all over the room. Messages are carried to the chairman. Mr. Daly shakes his head vigorously. Individual members, straining their eyes, become more insistent. Mr. Story is interrogated. There is no use denying it any further. Signor Bettino Abotto IS Bessie Abbott! A "Pipe Night" of the Players' has been desecrated by the presence of a woman!

The fact that the woman was one of the greatest prima donnas America has produced does not mitigate the offence.

Mr. Daly is called upon to "explain." The directors demand that he explain. Mr. Daly tenders his resignation. It is unanimously accepted.



Odd Sketch Designed for Miss Abbott's Costume as "Godiva" in the Title Role of the Mascagin Opera.



Mr. Arnold Daly, who played the joke on "The Players."

And this is how Mr. Daly explains his conduct over the telephone:

"That Bessie Abbott affair at the Players'?"

"Really, I haven't anything to say, except perhaps to marvel at the enterprise of the modern newspaper. Why, man, that incident you refer to occurred only six months ago, and here you are right on the job, just as though it happened yesterday!" How do you manage it?

"The story only just came out! Well, maybe that's so."

"Why did I do it? Well, I'll tell you. Suppose you belonged to a newspaper men's club. You would want to do something for the club, wouldn't you, even though you were the only newspaper man in it?"

"Well, I belonged to the Players' and all of a sudden it came to me that perhaps I had been too selfish, too self-centred—that I had never really done anything for the club—and so, out of a sense of pity for my fellow-members—yes, that's it, out of a deep sense of pity for my fellow-members, I felt that I ought to do something for them—something to liven them up."

"And so when they appointed me chairman on that eventful Pipe Night last January—the enterprise of you newspaper men is really astounding—I introduced Bessie Abbott as 'Signor Bettino Abotto, a talented female impersonator, who, possessing a natural tenor voice, also sings soprano,' and the dead and dying members of the Players' were very, very much impressed."

"Indeed, they were so very much impressed with Signor Abotto that my object almost failed, for, although the prima donna was accompanied by her husband, who was well-known to many of the members, and although her soprano voice was such that nobody but

a member of the Players' could possibly have accepted it as that of a female impersonator (not to say anything of her hands, form and features which her masculine attire could not wholly conceal) and although even a member of the Players' might have been expected to detect some slight resemblance between the names Bettino Abotto and Bessie Abbott, it looked for several hours as if the prima donna's identity would never be suspected!

"It was very funny. Quite recently I was asked whether I myself knew that Signor Abotto was a lady. How can anyone be really sure of these things?"

"Didn't I know I was violating the rules? As a matter of fact, there is nothing in the constitution which forbids women entering the premises. On the contrary, for all that appears in the constitution, a woman might even be put up for membership. But then, of course, directors can hardly be expected to be familiar with constitutions."

"And so about a month later I received a letter asking me to go down to the club to 'explain' the incident to the directors."

I just wrote a letter telling them my resignation was theirs for the taking, and they took it.

"Of course, if I had gone down I would have had to tell them that, as a matter of fact, it wasn't I who escorted the lady into the club at all, and then they would have asked me to name the culprit and all would be forgiven, and I would have been expected to say, 'Please, teacher, don't punish me, Johnny done it!' I tell you, the whole thing just bores me to death."

"But please be careful not to say anything to offend the members of the Players'. Brander Matthews may be a member for all I know, and I wouldn't want to offend him for the world. Be very careful, won't you?"

"Indiscreet? Yes, in one respect I was very indiscreet. I ought never to have acted as chairman for the Players'. That was really an indiscretion on my part for which I ought to have been severely disciplined. Indeed, I could hardly have complained in the circumstances had they declined my resignation and made me a member for life!"

Curing Toothache Through the Nose

At last a real cure for the toothache declared to be effective by several reliable doctors, has been discovered. It is the invention of Doctor Adolf Schwartz, an Austrian army surgeon now stationed at Gravosa, in Dalmatia, in Austria. It is based on the use of etheric oil of mustard which can be obtained in nearly every drug store.

The sufferer must be very careful to follow the instructions given by Dr. Schwartz in using the oil, otherwise it may cause serious injury to the eyes. The patient should close his eyes and lips as firmly as possible and with his finger stop the nostril on the opposite side of the face from that affected by the toothache. He then places a tiny bottle containing not more than five grams of the etheric oil of mustard to the open nostril and takes a deep breath. Immediate-

ly he will suffer a violent and painful inflammation accompanied by an abundant flow of tears, reddening of the face and temporary stopping of the breath. This pain lasts at the most one or two minutes. When it goes away the toothache disappears with it. The inflammatory conditions subside very quickly and in the majority of cases the toothache does not reappear within several hours, if at all. The treatment may then be recommended and repeated as often as two or three times with success.

The explanation of the success of this treatment is that the oil of mustard reaches the main trunk of the trigeminal nerve through the nose. The nerves of the teeth are little offshoots from this main nerve. The mustard sets up a temporary inflammation in the main nerve and when the nerve reacts against the mustard it drives out the inflammation from the little nerve ends in the teeth.

