

Trial by Jury

[Operetta, in one act; text by Gilbert. First produced at the Royalty Theatre, London, March 25, 1875.]

PERSONAGES.

Learned Judge. Plaintiff. Defendant. Counsel for the Plaintiff. Usher. Foreman of the Jury. Associate. First Bridesmaid.

[Barristers, attorneys, journeymen, and bridesmaids.]

The scene is laid in a London Court of Justice; time, the nineteenth century.

The little operetta, "Trial by Jury," was the first result of the successful collaboration of Gilbert and Sullivan, though it gave little hint of the extraordinary excellence as well as popularity of the long list which followed it. "The words and music were written and all the rehearsals completed within three weeks, and all London went to see it," says Sullivan's biographer. It was produced March 25, 1875, and had quite a run, Frederick Sullivan, Sir Arthur's brother, appearing in the rôle of the judge and contributing much to its success.

The story is a satire upon the English courts, the incident being a breach of promise case. Edwin is sued by Angelina. The usher impresses upon the jury its duty to divest itself of prejudice in one breath, and in the next seeks to prejudice it against the defendant by most violent denunciations of him. When Edwin enters he is at once requested by the jury to "dread our damages." He tells them how he became "the lovesick boy" first of one and then of another. The jurymen in chorus, while admitting that they were fickle when young, declare that they are now respectable and have no sympathy with him. The judge enters, and after informing the audience how he came to the bench, announces he is ready to try the breach of promise case. The

jury is sworn. Angelina enters, accompanied by her bridesmaids. The judge takes a great fancy to the first bridesmaid, and sends her a note, which she kisses rapturously and places in her bosom. Immediately thereafter the judge transfers his admiration to the plaintiff, and directs the usher to take the note from the bridesmaid and give it to Angelina, which he does, while the jurymen taunt the judge with being a sly dog, and then express their love for her also. The plaintiff's counsel makes the opening speech, and Angelina takes the witness-stand, but, feeling faint, falls sobbing on the foreman's breast, who kisses her as a father. She revives, and then falls sobbing upon the judge's breast, while the jurymen shake their fists at the defendant, who comes forward and offers to marry Angelina "to-day and marry the other to-morrow." The judge thinks it a reasonable proposition, but the plaintiff's counsel submits that "to marry two at once is Burglaree." In this dilemma Angelina embraces Edwin rapturously, but he repels her furiously and throws her into the arms of her counsel. The jury thereupon becomes distracted, and asks for guidance, whereupon the judge decides he will marry Angelina himself, to which she gives enthusiastic consent.

The best numbers in the operetta are the defendant's song, "When first my Old, Old Love I knew"; the juryman's song, "Oh! I was like that when I was a Lad"; the judge's song, "When I, Good Friends, was called to the Bar"; the pretty chorus of the bridesmaids, "Cover the Broken Flower"; the plaintiff's song, "O'er the Season Vernal"; and the defendant's song, "Oh! Gentlemen, listen, I pray." The London "Times," after the first performance, said: "There is a genuine humor in the music, as for instance in the unison chorus of the jurymen, and the clever parody on one of the most renowned finales of modern Italian opera; and there is also melody, both catching and fluent, here and there, moreover, set off by little touches in the orchestral accompaniments which reveal the experienced hand."