

The Mikado; or, The Town of Titipu

[Comic opera, in two acts; text by Gilbert. First produced at the Savoy Theatre, London, March 14, 1885.]

PERSONAGES.

Mikado of Japan. Nanki-Poo, his son, disguised as a minstrel, in love with Yum-Yum. Ko-Ko, Lord High Executioner of Titipu. Pooh-Bah, Lord High Everything Else. Pish-Tush, a noble lord. Yum-Yum, }
Pitti-Sing, } Peep-Bo, } three sisters, wards of Ko-Ko. Katisha, an
elderly lady, in love with Nanki-Poo.

[School girls, nobles, guards, and coolies.]

The scene is laid in Japan; time, the present.

That the "Princess Ida," ineffective as it is in some respects, did not indicate that the resources of Gilbert and Sullivan were exhausted, is shown by the great success of both in "The Mikado," which immediately followed it. This charming travesty of Japan, with the exception perhaps of "Pinafore," has proved to be the most popular of the Sullivan operas, and has even made an impression in Germany. It has been an equal success for both the musician and the librettist, and still retains its freshness and vivacity after seventeen years of performance.

The story of "The Mikado" is so well known that it need not be given with much fulness of detail. Nanki-Poo, the Mikado's son, is in love with Yum-Yum, the ward of the tailor Ko-Ko, who is also Lord High Executioner, and to whom she is betrothed, as Nanki-Poo is informed by Pooh-Bah, when he comes to Titipu in quest of her. Pooh-Bah, who accepted all the offices of the Ministers of State after their resignations when Ko-Ko was made Lord High Executioner, is also "the retailer of state secrets at a low figure," and furnishes much of the

delightful comedy of the opera. Nanki-Poo nevertheless manages to secure an interview with Yum-Yum, confesses to her he is the Mikado's son, and that he is in disguise to escape punishment for not marrying the elderly Katisha. Ko-Ko's matrimonial arrangements are interfered with by a message from the Mikado, that unless some one is beheaded in Titipu within a month he will be degraded. Nanki-Poo consents to be beheaded if he is allowed to marry Yum-Yum and live with her for the month. This being satisfactory, the arrangements for the nuptials are made.

The second act opens with Yum-Yum's preparations for her marriage. A *tête-à-tête* with Nanki-Poo is interrupted by Ko-Ko, who announces that by the law when a married man is beheaded his wife must be burned alive. This cools Yum-Yum's passion, and to save her Nanki-Poo threatens to perform the Happy Despatch that day. As this would endanger Ko-Ko, he arranges to swear to a false statement of Nanki-Poo's execution. Suddenly the Mikado arrives. Ko-Ko gives him the statement, but a great danger is imminent when the Mikado informs him he has killed the heir apparent and must suffer some horrible punishment. In the dénouement Nanki-Poo reappears, and Ko-Ko gets out of trouble by marrying the ancient Katisha, leaving Yum-Yum to Nanki-Poo.

The opera abounds in charming lyrics, though with a single exception, a march chorus in the second act, "Miya sama, miya sama," there is no local color to the music, as might have been expected in an opera entirely Japanese in its subject and dramatic treatment. Its lyrics are none the less delightful on that account. The most popular numbers in the first act are Ko-Ko's song, with its choral response, "You may put 'em on the List and they never will be missed"; the fascinating trio for Yum-Yum, Peep-Bo, and Pitti-Sing, "Three Little Maids from School are we"; Nanki-Poo's song, "A Wandering Minstrel"; and the trio for Ko-Ko, Pooh-Bah, and Pish-Tush, "My Brain, it teems." The leading numbers of the second act are Yum-Yum's song, "The Sun, whose Rays"; the quartette, "Brightly dawns our Wedding-Day"; the

Mikado's song, "A more Humane Mikado never"; Ko-Ko's romantic ballad, "On a Tree by a River a little Tomtit," which is in the genuine old English manner, and the well-known duet for Nanki-Poo and Ko-Ko, "The Flowers that bloom in the Spring, tra la."