



"THE PASSING OF ARTHUR"

Characters: St. Benignus, the Rev. G. W. Saunders (curate of Street); Bro. Lionel Mr. H. Bowditch; Queen Morgan Le Fay. Miss Berkeley; Queen of North Gallis, Miss Brymer; Queen of the Waste Lands, Miss Perkins; Lady of the Lake, Mrs. Oram.

Servant, Mr. Stanley Talbot; first Woman, Mrs. Higgins; second Woman, Miss Ebbsworth; a Man, Mr. Masters; Hermit, Mr. Heywood. Monks, Acolytes, Bearers, Native Britons, etc. Date, A.D. 542.

The abbot Benignus and two of the brethren, all in appropriate garb, are seen walking in the precincts of the Abbey Church, when from the outside is heard the sound of dirge-like chanting and music. The Abbot directs a brother to see who is without and the gates are opened to admit the funeral procession. The dead hero-king, Arthur, the Bayard of Ancient Britain, attired in royal purple, is carried in on a bier borne by four British chieftains. An aged hermit hobbles in front, and behind him walk the three fairy queens, the "Lady of the Lake," and white-robed priests. The aged Benignus advances to meet them, and Queen Morgan le Fay tells him that they have brought the great Arthur to "be king among the dead." The Queen Morgan le Fay bewails her sin in stealing the scabbard of the sword Excalibur, bereft of whose healing charm he had died of his wounds. But she is assured by St. Benignus of forgiveness, and her sister queens remind her of Merlin's prophecy that Arthur shall "come again."

The townspeople, who have been admitted, pray round the bier of their dead monarch, and mournfully exclaim "who will now protect them against the heathen?" St. Benignus assures them of God's protection, and then directs the removal of the body. Then comes a procession of grey monks, who bear uplifted a red cross, and a number of white-robed acolytes. The monks chant the funeral hymn, "Requiem Sempiternam," as they advance. Then the bier is lifted, and the procession winds slowly away to the strains of wailing music. The Fairy Queens and the Abbot follow, and the people bow to the ground in homage as the body passes. This is a most impressive scene, and is full of romantic interest, for the story of King Arthur is a never wearying one to all hero-worshippers, and the English are a nation of such. The stories of his wisdom, strength, and courage, his magic origin, and his wonderful sword "Excalibur," given to him by the "Lady of the Lake," always arouse a feeling of admiration akin to veneration; and Tennyson has rendered immortal the doings of Arthur and his twelve peerless knights of the Round Table.

The Fairy Queens were admirably portrayed, and Queen Morgan le Fay, who was a striking figure dressed in robes of dark green with a golden cincture about her flowing hair, delivered her lines with great expression. All the minor parts were carried out well, and the scene, formed by the crowd of monks and townsmen, dressed in their rich and varied garb, the stately Abbot, and the beautiful queens, was one not easily to be forgotten.

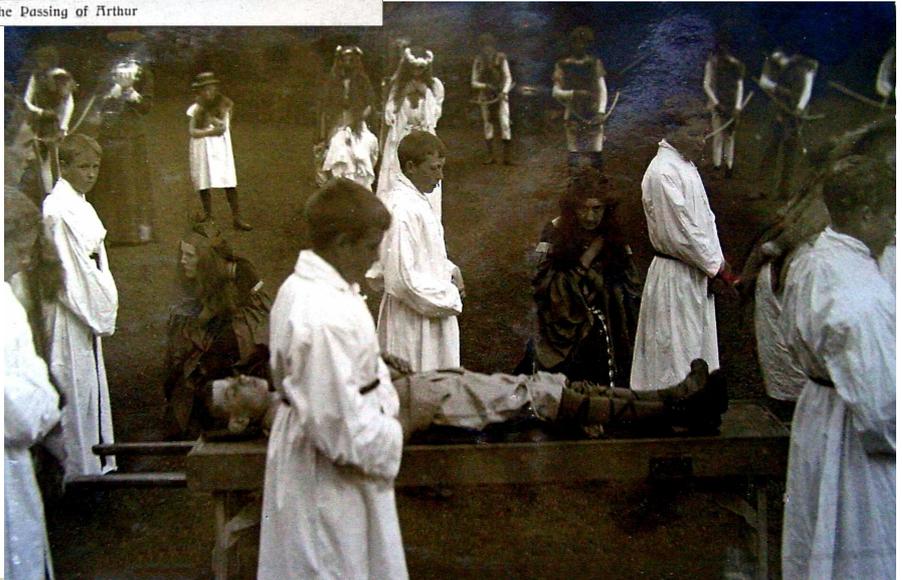


BUTLEIGH REVEL.—The Passing of Arthur

The passing of Arthur

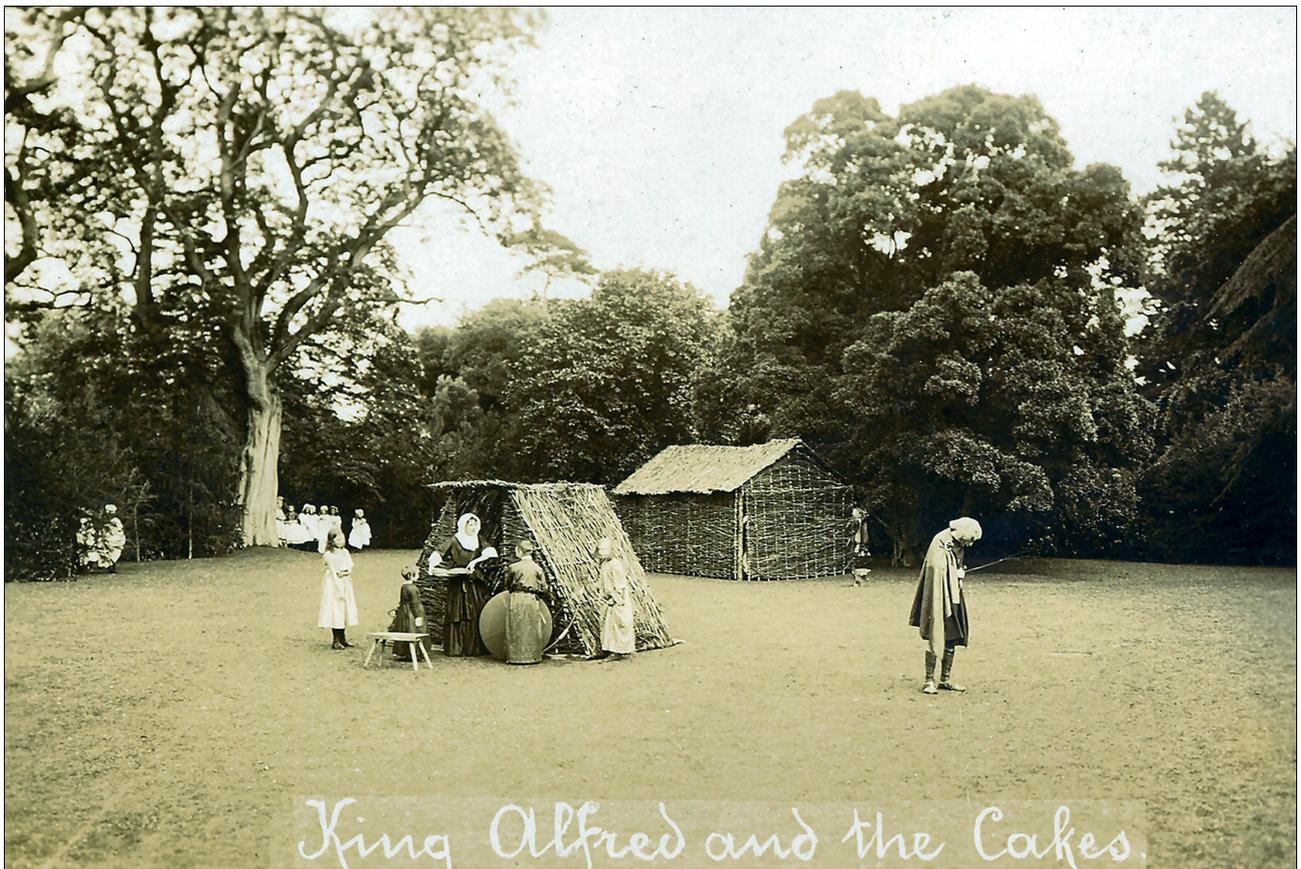
Postcard issued by the Central Somerset Gazette

King Arthur played by Guy Silcox lying on bier surrounded by acolytes; Ernest Matthews, W. Talbot, E. Higgins, William Andrews, James Balch, Francis Arthur, Fred Talbot and William Trask [Picture taken by J. Bradden]



View from the Grandstand :-
Mr. W. Tully's camera bottom left





"KING ALFRED."

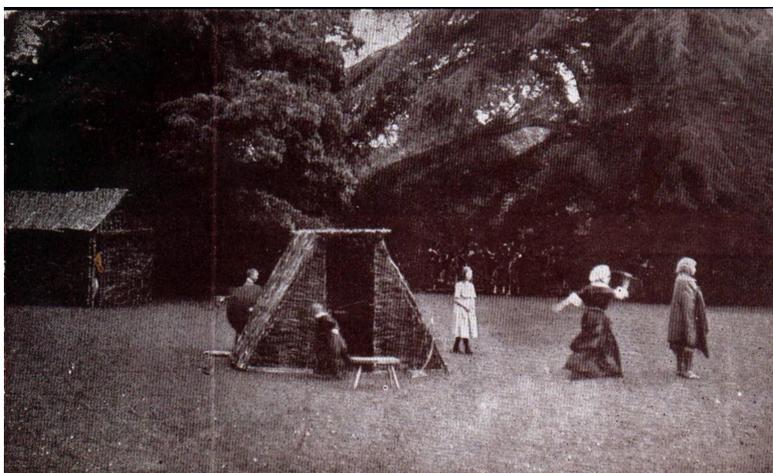
Scenes; King Alfred in the Swineherd's hut at Athelney; the Peace of Wedmore.

Characters: King Alfred, Mr. E. L. Christie, of Charlton Horethorne; Denulf (the swineherd), Mr. F. Linham; Gundred (his wife), Miss B. Friend; Osmond (a thane), Mr. C. Dunkerton; Beowulf (a thane), Mr. H. Dunkerton; Queen Ethelswytha, Miss Turner; the Royal Children the Atheling, Mr. W. Aldridge; Edmund, Mr. T. Talbot; Edward, Mr. H. Trask; Ethelwold, Mr. L. Davis; Ethelfreda, Miss Bradden; Asser (Bishop of Sherborne), Mr. Eli Davis; Guthrum, Mr. W. Higgins; a Monk, Mr. Bowditch; Danish Chiefs, Saxon Nobles, Monks, etc. Date, A.D. 878.

Some stirring music was a prelude to the next scene, and here the spectators were shown the hut of Denulf the Swineherd. His wife (Gundred) and children were seen about the hut engaged in work and play, when Denulf enters and, to the consternation of his better half, announces that he has brought home a guest, who, by the way, is none other than King Alfred the Great, then fleeing from the heathen Danes, who have defeated his armies. Denulf calls, and Alfred appears. He is a tall, flaxen-haired Saxon of handsome and imposing mien, and carries a spear and red target. Pleased at the stranger's appearance, Gundred bids him welcome, and her husband

departs leaving the two together. Then is enacted the familiar episode of the burning of the cakes, which Alfred is left by his hostess to look after, and she, returning and discovering them to be spoilt, rates the King for his negligence and beats him lustily with a stick. Then two Saxon thanes come on the scenes, seeking the king, and Gundred is full of contrition when she learns who it is that she has chastised so 'vigorously. But Alfred says that the fault was his for having been so careless, and promises that Denulf shall be rewarded when he (the King) comes into his own again. He then departs to lead his army to victory against the Danes.

The next scene represents the peace of Wedmore, when Alfred, having conquered the Danes and taken Guthrum, their king, prisoner, makes a treaty of peace with him at Wedmore; and Guthrum, who has been instructed by Asser, Bishop of Sherborne,



Butleigh Revel.—Alfred the Great.—"The Burning of the Cakes."

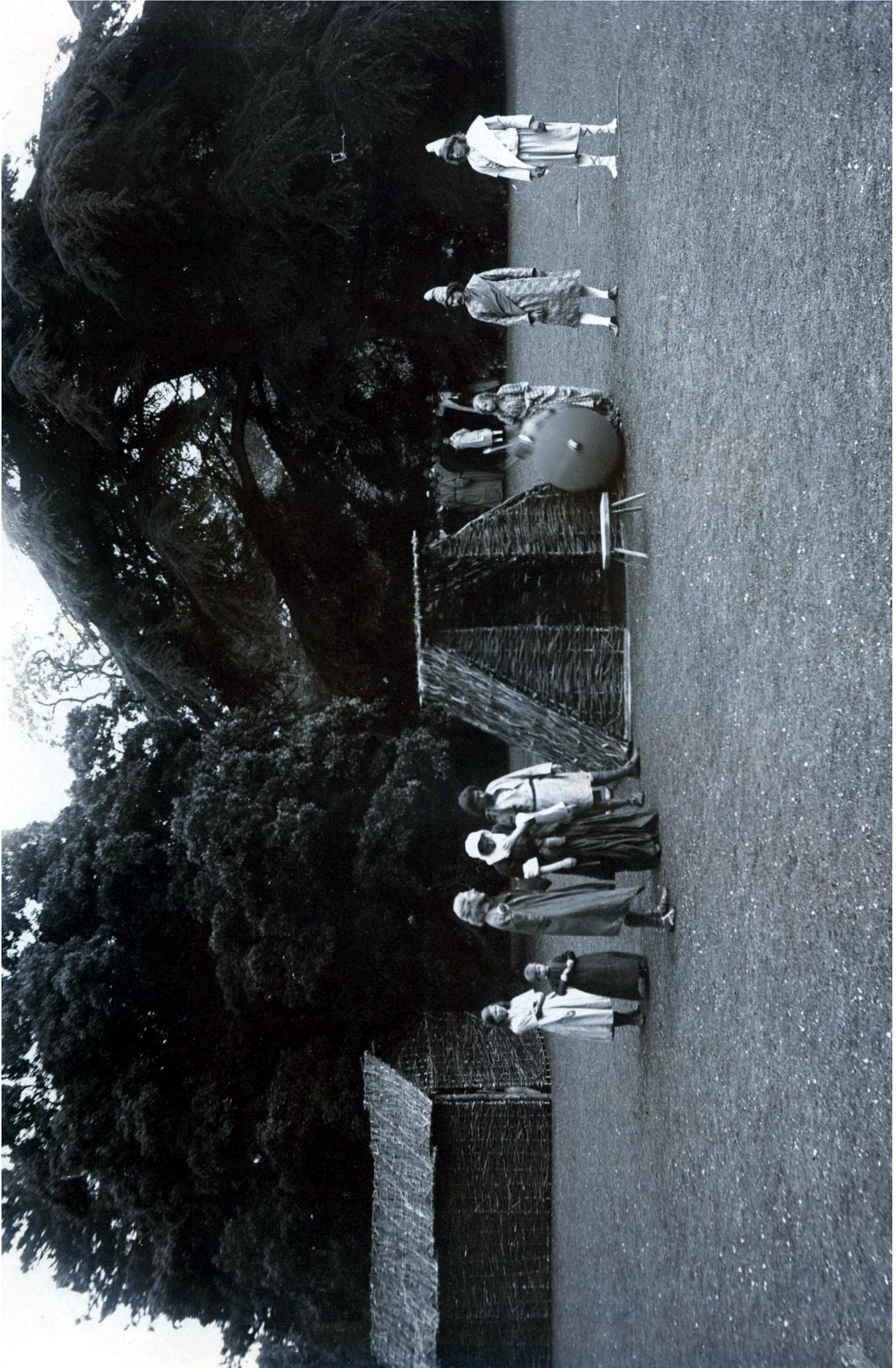
embraces the Christian faith. It is a brilliant scene, the gathering of Alfred's Court, the gorgeous and vivid dresses of the King, the Queen, the Royal children, and attendants being enhanced by the rich, but more sombre, colouring of the monkish, procession which enters when Asser leads Guthrum to the King. The treaty having been signed, the two kings depart with arms linked together in all good fellowship. Alfred, (however, perceives Denulf amid the cheering crowd. He calls him forth, and pledges his word that, in reward for having given him shelter, Denulf shall be made a thane. The procession then passes on, leaving Denulf dumb with astonishment. All through the scene Alfred is a very kingly figure, and he is ably supported by the other performers.



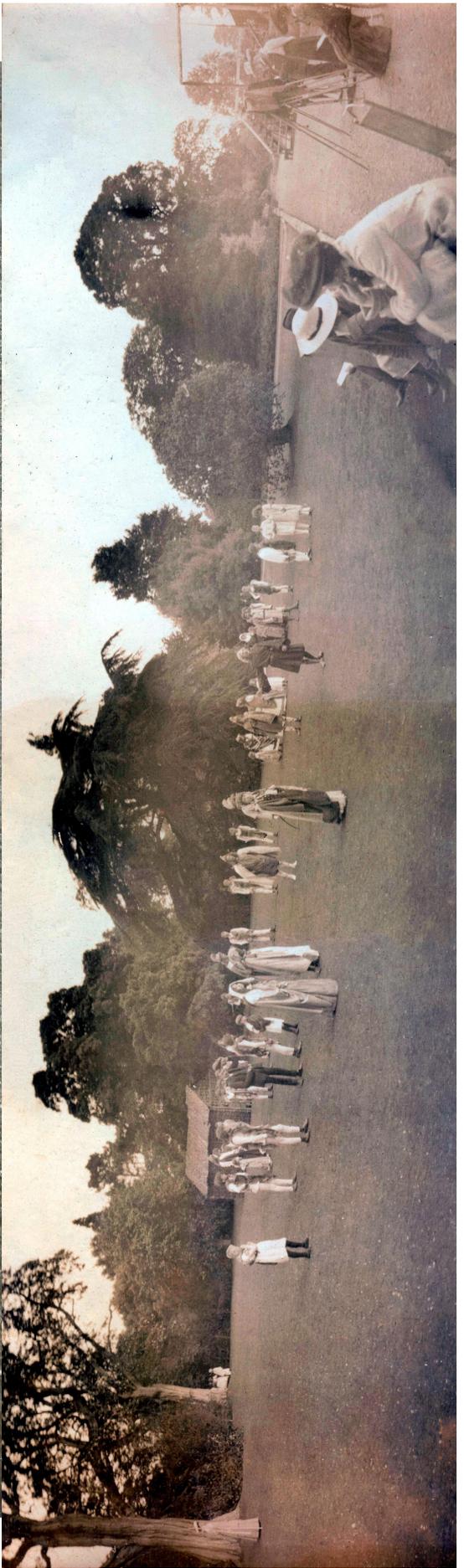
The Peace of Wedmore

















“ ST. DUNSTAN AND KING EDMUND IRONSIDES.”
THE RE-BUILDING OF THE ABBEY CHURCH.

Characters: King Edmund, Mr. R. Bath (Glastonbury); St. Dunstan, the Rev. G. D'Angiban, (vicar of Queen Camel); Cedric (a page), Master Victor Killen; Monks, Nobles, etc. Date. A.D. 940.

The cream of the whole pageant is seen in this act, so fitly introduced by "Avalon" with the words

"Glaston's great Church, by heathen hands destroyed,
 Lies desolate and ruined. But not long,
 Dunstan the Saint, beloved of Royal Edmund
 Restores her arches, rears her fallen walls,
 And from her ashes raises her to fame."

King Edmund Ironsides, resplendent in Royal robes, is discovered sitting on his throne attended by a crowd of nobles and attendants, when, to the inspiring music of "The March of the Priests," enters Dunstan, followed by monks, one of whom carries a roll of parchment. The Abbot is a noble figure, clothed in flowing robes and wearing a mitre and breast-plate.

The King rises to greet the holy man, and in answer to his enquiry Dunstan says that he craves a boon - the leave to re-build the Abbey Church at Glastonbury. He then shows the King a plan of the great Church that he would rear upon the old foundations. Edmund asks him how he can hope to compass such a mighty dream. The scene that follows is a telling one. The King - a tall, commanding figure - stands in reverent awe as the Abbot tells of his vision, and in sonorous and prophetic cadences, declaims the glory of the Abbey in time to come.

The King, uplifted by the words, exclaims: "Thus shall it be ! A new and greater church shall rise from its ruins; and when the eyes of Edmund Ironside shall close in death, his body shall lie within the sheltering walls of the Abbey raised by the, Holy Dunstan." The King and Dunstan then retire, followed by their attendants and a procession of black-robed monks, who slowly recede, to the martial strains of the "March of the Priests" and the plaudits of the spectators.

The scene is a stirring one, and solemn in its grandeur, and none better could have been selected to represent the central figures of Dunstan and the King. All the subordinate parts were also enacted strictly in accord with the spirit of the scene.









TABLEAU
"THE TRIBUTE OF WOLVES' SKINS AT EDGARLEY."

Characters : King Edgar, Mr. C. Higgins; Chieftains, Attendants, etc.

This tableau was an incident in the reign of Edgar the Peaceful. In order to clear out the ravaging wolves which then overran the country, he exacted a tribute of three hundred heads yearly from the Welsh, who then inhabited the western counties of England. This wise measure in a few years led to the extermination of the wolves. In the tableau the King is seen holding his Court at Edgarley, near Glastonbury, while the Welsh chieftains hold up the wolves' skins to his gaze. Guards stand at the sides. The tableau was very effectively arranged.

"KING HENRY I."

Scenes: King Henry I, granting the Charter for Tor Fair; Tor Fair in the Olden Time.

Characters: King Henry I, Mr. A. Prince; Queen, Miss Prince; Herald, Mr. G. Turner; King's Jester, Master R. Hodges; first man, Mr. B. Ryall; second man, Mr. H. Trefick first woman, Mrs. Little ; second woman. Miss Hayward ; third woman, Mrs. Davis; Monks, Courtiers, Townsfolk, etc. Morris Dancers: Messrs. J. Killen, D. Ebbsworth, R. Arthur, R. Davis, A. Talbot, E. Gregory, E. Farr, and W. Aldridge, and Misses E. Ebbsworth, I. Killen, M. Pike, B. Pike, L. Davis, E. Higgins, A. Turner, A. Stopford, and M. Arthur. -

Date, A.D. 1127.

This was a most interesting scene, being illustrative of King Henry I. holding his Court at Glastonbury and granting the charter for Tor Fair to the Singers of the Abbey. A great crowd streams into the arena, the townspeople bravely arrayed in holiday garments of rich and varied colours. Some of them speak of the King coming to "Glaston," while certain women tell how they have actually set eyes on him. The King's Jester enters, clothed in motley with cap and bells, and proceeds to cut antics among the crowd, who discuss his appearance. Then the Monks and Abbot enter, and after them the King and Queen and their retinue, amid the acclamations of the populace. The herald then proclaims the charter granted that day by the King, giving the right to hold "a fair at the Monastery of St. Michael de Torre, in the Isle of Glaston, belonging to the Chantry of the Abbey of Glastonbury, on the day before the Feast of St. Michael and on the day of the Feast." The proclamation is received with shouts of approval by the crowd. Then a change is made to the holding of Tor Fair as in "ye olden time." A number of morris-dancers, young men and girls, appear, and, after bowing before the King and Queen, go through intricate but pleasing dances to the strains of old-world music. The dancers are similarly attired in costumes of red and green, the girls wearing short skirts and boleros edged with bells and steeple-crowned hats; while the men had knee-breeches, boleros with sashes, and old-English flat caps.

The fair goes on merrily - knights dance with comely peasant women, black friars and grey-robed Benedictines with fair ladies. Others watch the graceful evolutions of the dancers. Packmen and pedlars vend their wares, and mountebanks and fools entertain the gaping crowd.



In one corner can be seen a couple of stalwart yeoman engaged in a bout of quarter-staffs while in another a merry monk is whispering soft nothings in the not unwilling ear of a fair damsel. It is the most brilliant picture that can be imagined, and one of kaleidoscopic richness and variety, all thrown into relief by the background of greenwood and the grey walls and battlements of the stately pile that overshadows the lawn.





