

The Sorcerer

A New and Original Modern Comic Opera, in Two Acts

Synopsis by Fredric Woodbridge Wilson

First produced at the Opera Comique Theatre, under the management of the Comedy-Opera Company (of which R. D'Oyly Carte was a director), on Saturday November 17, 1877, for 178 performances through May 24, 1878. Sullivan conducted the first performance.

SIR MARMADUKE POINTDEXTRE, an elderly Baronet	<i>Bass-Baritone</i>	Richard Temple
ALEXIS POINTDEXTRE, of the Grenadier Guards, Sir Marmaduke's Son	<i>Tenor</i>	George Bentham
DR. DALY, Vicar of Ploverleigh	<i>Baritone</i>	Rutland Barrington
THE NOTARY	<i>Bass-Baritone</i>	Fred Clifton
JOHN WELLINGTON WELLS, of the firm of J. W. Wells & Co., Family Sorcerers, St. Mary Axe	<i>Light Baritone</i>	George Grossmith
HERCULES, a Page	<i>Non-singing (Juvenile)</i>	(Not recorded)
LADY SANGAZURE (ANNABELLA), a Lady of ancient lineage	<i>Contralto</i>	Isabella (Mrs. Howard) Paul
ALINE, Lady Sangazure's Daughter, betrothed to Alexis	<i>Soprano</i>	Alice May
MRS. PARTLET (ZORAH), a Pew-Opener	<i>Contralto</i>	Harriet Everard
CONSTANCE, a Pupil-Teacher, Mrs. Partlet's Daughter	<i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>	Giulia Warwick

TOWN-FOLK

First revived (with *Trial by Jury*) at the Savoy Theatre, under the management of R. D'Oyly Carte, on October 11, 1884, for 150 performances through March 12, 1885. (For the larger theatre the opera was revised and augmented.) Revived (with *Trial by Jury*) at the Savoy Theatre on September 22, 1898, for 102 performances through December 31, 1898.

ACT I — THE GARDEN OF SIR MARMADUKE'S ELIZABETHAN MANSION, IN THE VILLAGE OF PLOVERLEIGH

Under a large marquee are spread the elements of a banquet to celebrate the betrothal of Sir Marmaduke's son, Alexis, to Lady Sangazure's daughter, Aline (Chorus, *Ring forth, ye*

bells). Mrs. Partlet, the church Pew-Opener, meets her daughter Constance, who is obviously distracted (Recitative, *Constance, my daughter, why this strange depression?*). She guesses that her daughter is in love, and Constance confirms her supposition (Aria, *When he is here*). Mrs. Partlet sympathizes, and confides that she too was once in love. She is interrupted by the entrance of the Vicar, Dr. Daly. Constance is agitated, and she confesses to her mother that the object of her affections is none other than the Vicar himself. Dr. Daly takes no notice of them (Recitative, *The air is charged with amatory numbers*), but is himself love-lorn, the days having passed when the maidens “Would gaze upon me, rapt in admiration” (Ballad, *Time was when Love and I were well acquainted*). They converse, and Mrs. Partlet boldly puts forward her daughter, but the Vicar proclaims himself a bachelor, the time for matrimony having long passed. Mrs. Partlet and Constance exit, but Mrs. Partlet vows that she has not given up.

Sir Marmaduke and his son Alexis come out of the house, and are greeted with polite congratulations by Dr. Daly (Recitative, *Sir Marmaduke — my dear young friend, Alexis*). The Vicar takes his leave, and Sir Marmaduke expresses his happiness at the union of the two families: Lady Sangazure is, after all, “the seven thousand and thirty-seventh in direct descent from Helen of Troy.” Alexis is delirious in his happiness, but his father cautions him against displaying his affection too publicly. By way of example, he says he and Lady Sangazure were themselves in love, fifty years ago, but managed to confine their expressions to polite exchanges, which are “Much more delicate — much more respectful.”

Seeing Aline approaching, they retire to leave her in peace to prepare for the “interesting ceremony in which she is to play so important a part.” Aline is accompanied by a chorus of girls (Chorus, *With heart and with voice Let us welcome this mating*), and after thanking the Villagers (Recitative, *My kindly friends*) she sings of her own joy (Aria, *Oh, happy young heart!*). Lady Sangazure enters (Recitative, *My child, I join in these congratulations*), and soon Alexis is welcomed (Chorus, *With heart and with voice*). Lady Sangazure and Sir Marmaduke exhibit signs of strong emotion at the sight of each other (Recitative, *Oh, my adored one!*), but they subdue their passion (Duet, *Welcome joy, adieu to sadness*). The Notary presents the marriage contract (Recitative, *All is prepared for sealing and for signing*), and after Alexis and Aline sign the document (Chorus, *See they sign, without a quiver, it*), they are left together.

Alexis pronounces his conviction that the “in marriage alone is to be found the panacea for every ill,” and he states that it is his hope to convince the world that love should not be subject to “the artificial barriers of rank, wealth, education, age, beauty, habits, taste, and temper.” He has reason to be optimistic, for his lectures in the workhouses, beershops, and shipyards “have been received with enthusiasm.” Although, in his experience, “the aristocracy hold aloof,” he maintains that “love should live for love alone” (Ballad, *Love feeds on many kinds of food, I know*).

In order to advance his cause, Alexis has summoned Mr. John Wellington Wells, of an old

established firm of family sorcerers, to bestow on the entire village the benefits of his “Patent Oxy-Hydrogen Love-at-first-sight Philtre.” Mr. Wells enters, a conscientious businessman eager to please his client (Patter-Song, *My name is John Wellington Wells*). They agree on terms, and determine to administer the potion by means of the tea that is to be served at the wedding feast. Mr. Wells casts his weird spell (Incantation, *Sprites of earth and air*), summoning a chorus of fiends and spirits, and frightening Aline and Alexis.

The Villagers all enter for the breakfast feast (Chorus, *Now to the banquet we press*). Tea is brewed by the Vicar, in a most scientific and enthusiastic manner (“Teacup Brindisi,” *Eat, drink, and be gay*). By the conduct of the Villagers the charm appears to be working (Chorus, *Oh, marvellous illusion!*), and the act concludes as they resume the Brindisi, while struggling desperately against its effects.

ACT II — THE MARKET-PLACE IN THE VILLAGE OF PLOVERLEIGH,
HALF AN HOUR LATER

The Villagers dance in ill-assorted couples (Chorus, *Happy are we in our loving frivolity*). Through the action of the love potion, Constance has been coupled, against her will, with the aged Notary (Aria and Ensemble, *Dear friends, take pity on my lot*). Alexis and Aline see nothing but happiness in the result, and Alexis insists that he and Aline should themselves take the potion, to protect their love against the vagaries of time. When Aline refuses, asking him to have faith in her constancy, whereupon Alexis proclaims, “It is not love!” (Ballad, *Thou hast the power thy vaunted love To sanctify*).

Dr. Daly enters in a state of puzzlement concerning the behavior of the Villagers, who have approached him in a body to ask him to perform their marriages without delay. Even Sir Marmaduke has let it be known that he intends to marry. For his own part, however, the Vicar is disappointed; he recalls his own yearning for companionship. Sir Marmaduke enters with his bride-to-be, who is none other than Mrs. Partlet. Sir Marmaduke can only concur with his son’s reservations about her fitness for her new rôle, though they take an optimistic view of the situation (Quintet, *I rejoice that it’s decided*).

They leave the stage, and Mr. Wells, who has overheard them, enters, guilt-ridden (Recitative, *Oh, I have wrought much evil with my spells!*). Lady Sangazure enters, disconsolate; but she sees Mr. Wells, and, owing to the action of the potion, she is fascinated by him. Mr. Wells is not under the philtre’s spell, however, and though she attempts to capture his affections (Recitative, *What is this fairy form I see before me?*; Duet, *Hate me! I drop my H’s — have through life!*), he claims that he is already engaged (Recitative, *At what I am going to say be not enraged*). She leaves in anguish, leaving Mr. Wells to consider his cruelty compounded by his mischief (Recitative, *Oh, hideous doom — to scatter desolation*). In atonement, he resolves to marry Lady Sangazure.

Aline enters alone, and, to prove her love for Alexis (Recitative, *Alexis! Doubt me not, my loved one!*), decides to drink from the phial. She does so, but as she is leaving, she meets Dr. Daly, who is playing on a flageolet (Song, *Oh, my voice is sad and low*). She is fascinated by the Vicar, and he in turn falls in love with her (Ensemble, *Oh, joyous boon! oh, mad delight!*). Alexis enters, and learns with joy that Aline has taken the philtre. Aline and Dr. Daly correct his misunderstanding, and Alexis angrily renounces Aline. The Villagers enter in response to the disturbance (Chorus, *Oh, what is the matter, and what is the clatter?*). Alexis threatens to denounce Aline (Recitative, *Prepare for sad surprises*), but Dr. Daly defends her, and offers to step aside in favor of Alexis.

Lady Sangazure and Mr. Wells enter, and Alexis asks the sorcerer if there is no way to undo the spell. Mr. Wells replies, "Or you or I must yield up his life to Ahrimanes." The choice is left to the people (Finale, *Or I or he Must die!*), and they demand the sorcerer's sacrifice. As Wells sinks down to meet his fate, the spell is broken, and all of the old couples find one another again (Chorus, *Oh, my adored one!*). The opera ends as the company once again prepare for the wedding feast.

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