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ED. S. THOMPSON, The Walk-Over Man

How Ak-Sar-Ben May Be Made a Better Show

THE hundreds of out-of-town guests who enjoy the hospitality of good King Ak-Sar-Ben during the season of his festival it would seem treason to suggest that anything of brain or energy could be brought to bear upon the affair to make it more attractive or more successful. It is a season of delight and the loyal enthusiasm of the men and women of Quivera is the one thing which makes it possible and profitable. That is just as it should be. Those who come as Omaha guests would be ungrateful indeed if they should come in a spirit of carping criticism or unsympathetic fastidiousness.

Some men, occupying the position of trusted advisers to the king, are bound by duty to hold themselves always in a critical attitude. Members of the board of governors, associated and connected with his majesty, bear upon their shoulders the burden of preparation and execution, and if even they allow themselves to be carried away by any tide of thoughtless impulses the joy of the faithful common folk would be lessened and disturbed.

If these men were born governors and not men, they might be expected to agree always upon all subjects brought before them and the ideas of one would be the policies of all. As long as this is not the case, however, there must be some projects which meet with favor only from one or two of the men of wisdom and the others remain unconvinced of their desirability.

With these ideas for the betterment of the festival and the affairs of the kingdom in general are as daily food and drink. They fill their minds and bubble over and sometimes they have been known to divulge to meek and lowly scribes the mighty plans and purposes that busy them in the watches of the night.

Could Diets has often been the lucky official to whose lot has fallen the task of caring for the fair damsels whom Ak-Sar-Ben invites to his court to attend and honor his queen and, their welfare is a problem which vexes him. For the present year, however, he has a plan which promises to help in their entertainment.

"Some proper disposal of the maids has always been a hard problem to solve," says his excellency, Mr. Dietz. "There are dozens of these girls who are brought in here from outside towns who are prominent enough in their home town, but quite often they have very few friends here in the city. They have very little idea of what is expected of them, and hardly understand the nature of the invitation when they are asked to be 'maids of honor.' For example, I know of one case where the girl with an imaginative and her ambitious mother supposed that she was to be Ak-Sar-Ben's queen. Her mother came to Omaha several weeks before the festival date and ordered clothes galore for her daughter, spending it far and wide that she was to be queen of the ball. Naturally she had a dull disappointment when she discovered that she was only one of many, and at that was pretty much of the ball. It was not because she or any other girl is unattractive that she had few dances taken—it is the fault of the way things have been organized. These girls, who, as I said, have practically no friends in the town at all, are brought here and then left to their own resources. The Omaha men cannot be blamed for dancing at the ball with the young women that they already know. It is only natural that they should mix with their friends and associates. The girls are as a consequence left wallflowers. No one pays any attention to them. It looks sometimes as if they would be justified in considering an invitation to be a maid at Ak-Sar-Ben's ball as rather an empty honor.

"This year we have a new plan. Every maid to whom an invitation has been issued will be personally taken in charge by a prominent society woman, who shall take it upon herself to see that all due attention is paid her, and that her entertainment is as hospitable as it should be. Women who hold high positions in Omaha's society have volunteered to do this work willingly and I believe that this year at least the maids will be properly cared for and not left to their own devices."

If J. Penfold, who also holds a place as a trusted helper of his impartial majesty has no fears, or the success of the festival. In his opinion there is only one thing that can possibly prevent the coming of more people this year before.

"We ought to have a bigger and a better carnival than ever before," says Mr. Penfold. "It will be more carefully planned just as each year we add something newer and more spectacular and there is no real reason why we should not have more attendance. The railroads are the only possible stand obstacle on the question of rates and in return for offering a 1-cent regular fare from them we can get nothing better than that for our special occasions. They seem set and it is of course hopeless to expect that when they have refused the state fair a one way fare for the round trip that they will give a 2-cent rate."

Governor Emil Brandeis believes that there may be some people left in the world who have never heard of Omaha and its general sovereign.

"One thing which I would suggest to improve the carnival and the whole Ak-Sar-Ben year," says Mr. Brandeis, "would be more advertisements. There are a number of such things that are advertised in the standard eastern magazines and there is no reason that I can see why Omaha's attractiveness should not be set forth in the same way. Advertise the carnival. Advertise Omaha. It would not be a mistake to run a big display ad in several of the eastern magazines weekly and monthly, such as the Century and Collier's for several numbers. It would cost money, of course, but if we had it there would be no better way to spend it. Every year yet, we have had too short a supply of funds to allow any such thing, but if we could have the cash I would advise that disposal of it. There are 50 country newspapers in surrounding territory, which are given cuts for use in the issues just preceding the carnival and posters are also sent out for pasting up in the towns. All this is of course the best way to advertise with the little money we have for that purpose, but if we ever have more the magazine idea is the one we ought to put into execution."

Upon one idea several of the governors are very well agreed. The decoration of the downtown district has always been considered one of the most attractive features of the carnival season. The streets at night with their long rows of sparkling incandescents and the magnificent arches and cross lines at the intersections win admiration from the visiting multitudes and help more than anything else to give the whole affair a gala appearance. The Ak-Sar-Ben colors displayed from widow balconies and even from the coat lapsels of the faithful adds as much to the gaiety of the days as do the lights to the evening. But even with all the lavishness with which King Ak-Sar-Ben himself has arranged his spectacle to

please the eyes of his subjects they have been very lax in fulfilling their part of the decoration schemes.

"The one thing we need more than anything else to make the Ak-Sar-Ben carnival more attractive," says C. E. Courtney, "is more decoration." Ak-Sar-Ben authorities do their part in lighting up the streets and furnishing the beautiful parades, but the merchants, for whose benefit the carnival is given, neglect this very important feature. Think how much brighter and more brightly the city would have if every man who owns or occupies a store building would decorate it. Festoon it with bunting and electric lights. Put fine displays in his windows and make all of his advertisements have some bearing on the occasion. It is a straight business proposition. The carry it for the merchants. They are the ones who profit by the great crowds we have here and they are the ones who ought to take it upon themselves, much more than they do, to make the city and their own places of business more attractive to the out-of-town people while they are here. And even then the business side of it is not the whole nor even the greater consideration. We have these people here as our guests. While they are here we are supposed to be doing everything we can as patriotic citizens to show forth the beauties and attractions of our city. These motives ought to be enough to make every merchant consider it his duty and privilege to decorate as elaborately as his purse will afford."

Another governor, who is imbued strongly with the decoration idea, is C. E. Black. "If I should talk to you for half an hour," said Mr. Black, "I should talk decoration all the time. That is the one thing where we fall down at festival time, I think. It is not because the Ak-Sar-Ben officials will not do what they can because we always have as many street lights as we can afford and no one could criticize their beauty. But merchants are neglectful and it is up to them to help the matter. I have always made it a point as a business man to decorate every part of my store with Ak-Sar-Ben colors. This year I am going still farther. If people in adjoining and surrounding buildings do not decorate I intend to speak to them about it and see if a little missionary work will help some. If necessary I may offer to furnish the decorations for offices over my store if the occupants do not put up hunting of their own and will allow me to put mine in their windows."

No less insistent upon the importance of decoration is Gordon W. Wattles. "I would say that decoration and enthusiasm are two things which we have, of course, but of which we could use a great deal more. Let the merchants decorate their places of business and professional men their offices. It would not do any harm if a few of the residences which are close to the business section would take on a gay appearance. Another thing that would help and it really must precede the other is more generous enthusiasm. The carnival cannot be a success if the merchants do not shout for it and pull for it. The men who do not attend the parades or are perfectly lifeless and uninterested at them do not help affairs out much. Let them wake up and enthusiasm. When they do we will have carnivals even more successful than they are now."

William L. Yetter, another who occupies a place among the seats of the mighty and speaks wise words into the ear of his gracious majesty, believes that the parades instead of resembling calm and dignified ceremonies should take a more noisy and youthful air.

"We want cheering at the parades," says Mr. Yetter. "During the daylight parades every one is silent or else confines his commendations to whispers or handclapping. The affair is supposed to be a festival, and at a festival a laughing, noisy, happy crowd is what one expects and what there ought to be. It strikes me that it might be a good idea to have cheering sections organized just as college boys have at football games. The younger enthusiasts could lend the aid of their strong lungs and we might have King Ak-Sar-Ben's triumphal march seem something really like a triumph. If a little whole-souled enthusiasm could be injected into the crowds by such means I think it would be a good thing and add very materially to the attractiveness of the festival."

More far reaching than all the ideas which have been advanced and set forth by the other governors is the plan which J. C. Root suggests.

"Make the carnival season the occasion for some national convention," says Mr. Root. "Why would it not be a good plan to bring such a thing as a national improvement congress or an irrigation convention or something like that here every year about this time. We could have national leaders here to speak, and I imagine that if there are any people in the surrounding territory that don't come to the carnival as it is they would come with this as an added attraction. Morning sessions could be held and the convention would in no way interfere with the other festivities. The presence of a few distinguished men would give dignity to the occasion and they would be useful for appearance at some of the regular Ak-Sar-Ben ceremonies. The more far-reaching we make this celebration the better, and the best way that I know of to help things out is to add such a national gathering to the usual festivities."

So it is that the wise governors plot and plan how they may help the king of Quivera in his coronation and the entertainment of his people. Ideas grow into plans, and put into execution with the aid of the treasury in the coffers of the king they gladden the hearts of his subjects and add everlasting glory to his dynasty and his reign.

Simple Arithmetic.

Perhaps she read the statement made by the Department of Agriculture that the value of the eggs laid by the hens of the United States in a year would be enough to pay off the national debt, or, maybe, she "just thought it up," but, anyway, this pretty little Baltimore girl was convinced that she had everything all fixed. She has been engaged to a very nice young fellow for some time, but to meet, people the amount of his present salary would appear an insurmountable obstacle to matrimony. This was the view of her father, but when expressed she met it with a happy smile. "Oh, I have thought that all out," she declared.

"You have, eh?" papa asked, knowing something of his daughter's business abilities.

"Yes. And it was so easy," she bubbled. "I was making the market the other day, and I saw a year little polka-dotted hen for only 25 cents, and I bought her. I read in a poultry paper that a hen will raise twenty or twenty-five chicks in a season. Well, next year we'll have twenty-five hens, and so, of course, they'll be 625 chicks the next year and 15,625 the next and 390,625 the next and 9,765,625 the next and 244,140,625 the next. And just as what that are gets to—why, selling them at 50 cents each would give us \$1,220,703 in five years. That won't be so long to wait for."

—Harper's Weekly.

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