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## Coronation Ball the Culmination of Carnival Brilliance and Gaiety

AT THE close of the carnival season, as a culmination of all the festivities that have prevailed in Quivera's capital for a fortnight, comes that splendid function to which all the rest have been but preliminary—the coronation of the king and of the queen and the brilliant ball that attends the ceremony. Since the house of Ak-Sar-Ben has reigned over the land thirteen monarchs have been crowned and thirteen of the fairest daughters have been led to the throne amid the plaudits of thousands of loyal subjects. It is a ceremony of surpassing brilliancy and from every quarter of the kingdom the knights and their ladies come to do homage to the newly crowned king and queen and to participate in the revelry.

The grim old Den, the Mecca of thousands of knights who each year pledge their allegiance to the king, and that has been the scene of untellable tests of courage and endurance, is transformed into a veritable fairyland where thousands of lights, red, yellow, green and white, combine with trailing vines, flowers, bunting and splashing fountains, music and a handsomely costumed throng in a scene of surpassing brilliancy never to be forgotten by those who have been privileged to look upon it, and that each year takes on some fresh beauty. The great rafters and beams overhead that, unadorned, seem impossible obstacles to anything pertaining to the ornate, are made the supports for arches of brilliant lights below which myriads of bulbs glowing with the tri-color of the king subdue their brilliancy and shed a soft light over the multitude below.

At the north end of the great arena is raised the royal throne, approached by a flight of broad steps carpeted with crimson velvet. At either side of this approach, well above the heads of the assemblage; but still below the throne, is reserved a place for the ladies in waiting to the queen and the ladies of the court, while at the south end rises the platform where the king's musicians contribute their share to the occasion. And all about the sides of the great building the galleries extend from the floor to the very base of the brilliantly illuminated arches overhead. Amid such a setting the coronation and the ball take place.

To be called to share the throne with King Ak-Sar-Ben is the greatest honor that can come to a daughter of Quivera, so coveted is the honor, in fact, that every year it is whispered daughters of the most noble families of the realm wait with fluttering hearts for the possible summons from Samson, chamberlain to the king, until the time is past for such bidding. Then they can only wait on until the king in his own good time shall make known the identity of his choice, for it is the pleasure of the king to guard this secret so jealously that even the fortunate one herself dare not tell upon whom has fallen his royal favor. It is also the pleasure of the king to choose his consort from among the younger maidens, those who have known nothing of the world outside their father's homes and the school room. This has not always been so, but it has been most frequently so, those who dare to speculate have come to cast their eyes among the debutantes, or, rather, those maidens who will be debutantes, for out of deference to his majesty formal presentation of these daughters is always deferred until after the coronation.

Next to the honor of being chosen queen is the privilege of serving as a "special maid" to her majesty, and with these honors Samson is wont to console and to delight eight young women. As the identity of the queen is never made known until she ascends the steps of the throne, where the multitude may see her face for themselves, it is the custom to appoint nine young women to serve as "special maids" to the queen, and one of these nine—no one may guess which one—is the queen. This leaves an even number of special attendants, and to contribute one of the most effective features to the coronation ceremony. The summons that Samson issues to these fortunate ones is ever prized as a souvenir and, besides this, when the ceremony is over, each young woman is presented another valuable souvenir.

And then there are the other maidens and the ladies in waiting, and the ladies of the court, who are bidden from every quarter of the realm. These, too, are among the especially honored, for they are feted and dined by the good knights and ladies of the capital city during their entire stay and are privileged to occupy places of honor during the coronation ceremony.

Finally the night of the great function arrives and when all have assembled in the brilliantly lighted Den, "at the stroke of nine," a peal of trumpets and a burst of music announces that the king has arrived. First comes the grand march of the knights in their spectacular costume and then the faithful board of governors, and finally a second peal of trumpets tells that the king and his queen are at the door.

As his majesty passes the length of the great hall and ascends the throne steps, the old castle shakes with applause as the people recognize which of the sons of the house of Ak-Sar-Ben is to serve them as ruler. Then comes the first ceremony, and when this has been finished, seated upon his throne, he awaits the coming of his queen. Again the royal trumpets ring out and once more the people hold their breath with expectancy as the eight special maids pass with measured step out onto the floor of the great hall. All are

gowned alike and from such a distance it is difficult at first to make out just which is which—and which one is missing. But scarcely before this can be determined the queen, herself, makes her appearance and puts an end to the weeks of suspense. As the people recognize her another mighty cheer and clapping of hands make the old Den shake, drowning out the music of the royal march and continuing until she has ascended the steps of the throne and stands before her king.

With his own hands he places the crown upon her head and as he raises her to her feet again the special maids, ladies and knights of the court hurry up to offer their congratulations, while the multitude once more makes the castle ring with its applause. As the noise subsides the king's musicians take up their program and down on the floor there is a hurrying to and fro among the guests assembled. The congratulations and filling of the programs requires half

an hour or so, and then both king and queen lay aside the coronation robes and descend to the dancing floor and the great ball is begun. From then on it is not unlike other brilliant functions of its kind except that it is the premier social event of the whole year in Quivera.

But the story of the Ak-Sar-Ben ball is not new to the people. They all know the order of the ceremony and about what the evening will bring. However, there is a charm about the great gathering that all seem powerless to resist. Year after year the first and the best of the land go to the ball always to find some new attraction and some fresh reason for being proud to have a part in the success of such a function. It is the occasion above all others to which women of fashion can be induced to wear their most elaborate costumes and their finest jewels, and to which men go willingly. It is, in fact, the premier social event of the year.

## Cinderella Ball Gives Children of Kingdom Their Chance for Pleasure

THE children of the kingdom of Quivera have always been dear to the heart of his imperial majesty, the king, but never before this year have such extensive and elaborate preparations been made for their entertainment and amusement. The future citizens of Ak-Sar-Ben are to have their first glimpse of the king's magnificence and splendor, and their first realization of his generous interest in their pleasure so early in life that they will grow up in an atmosphere of respect for their rightful sovereign. It was a wise and well considered policy which impelled his majesty to decide that the day after the grand coronation ball, when all his subjects should have paid their homage to his newly announced queen and to his own regal self, the children should have a ball of their own. No event since the birth of most of the children who are participating in it has brought them into a common enterprise with so many of their own kind. The Cinderella ball will be a glimpse of fairyland such as few children ever get to see, and over 500 of Omaha's little ones will have the still greater joy of taking an active part in the production.

During the rehearsals on hot summer days, which have been necessary in the preparations for this great performance, the children have made things easy for themselves by their unceasing enthusiasm and abandon. The whole affair is a great game to most of them. They are so interested in the figures of the dance, the skill which the more gifted of their number display and the fun of playing at being fairies, that they have no time to be tired. It is this quality in the work of the children which has made it possible for W. E. Chambers, the dancing master in charge, to bring them to so high a standard of training in so short a time. Mr. Chambers, who has been giving his time to this affair as a favor to the advisers of the king, has spared neither his ability or his labors to make it a thoroughly artistic and beautifully planned entertainment, and the children have been by his careful teaching impressed with his own sense of what an airy frolic dance in honor of the king should be.

The representative of his majesty's board of governors who has charge of the Cinderella ball is Mr. Joseph M. Cudahy, who, with Mrs. Clement Chase and others, originated the idea, but he has since turned the management of the work over to Mrs. Chase and her committee, Mrs. F. P. Kirkendall and Mrs. J. R. Scoble. These three women have taken upon themselves the task of providing costumes for all the children, while Mr. Chambers was giving them his training in the dances. To properly dress a company of 500 small people to represent fairies, elves and courtiers of a fairy palace is a big undertaking, and in this case it was made still more difficult by the fact that Mrs. Chase has insisted that the costumes be not only beautiful, but as historically correct as it may be possible to make gowns of fairy creatures. No unscholarly incongruities have been allowed to creep into the dresses and a definite color scheme has been carried out. The 500 costumes could not be obtained at any local costumers, however. Such an order would swamp the ordinary man of wigs and tinsel armor for the rest of his natural life. It was for the resourcefulness of the woman's committee to establish a costumer's business of their own. Dressmakers, tailors, designers and

fitters, a regular staff of them, were hired and set to work, and there will not be a single forlorn fairy or a disappointed hobgoblin left without clothes to make Bother Goose seem as natural as a newspaper.

A new feature of the ball of the Den where the Cinderella ball will be held Saturday afternoon, October 4, is the four floodlights now being placed in position and equipped to spread such a radiance over the dancing floor, with changing colors and kaleidoscopic flashes that the spectators will be bewildered by the magic of the fairies' power.

Who is to be the Prince? and who is to be Cinderella? are two questions fraught with much meaning and interest to the children. They discuss possibilities with bated breath and are alert for some betrayal of the secret from those few powers who know. Even the royal persons themselves, who are to be presented to their subjects that Saturday afternoon, after the romantic ceremony of the little slipper, are not as yet aware of their identity. They will not know until the last moment, when there is barely time to give them a hurried rehearsal to fit them for their great honor. The committee feared that if the young royalty was made aware of its own importance too long before the great day accumulated pride and importance might break through the bonds of princely reserve and the secret would be out. Who could possibly expect a 10-year-old girl to keep secret from her best chum for weeks the fact that she was going to be the Cinderella princess at the great Ak-Sar-Ben ball? It would be too much to ask. So the chosen pair are ignorant of their approaching exaltation which will lift them to as proud and happy an eminence, probably, as they can ever hope to occupy if all the kingdoms of the world are awaiting them. To be prince at the Cinderella ball is enough honor to last most boys all the rest of a natural life. The children regard it in this light, for even the privilege of wearing a badge signifying membership in the chorus is glory which the youngster thoroughly appreciates.

The honor of taking part in the ball, however, is by no means confined to those who have been trained as parts in the ballet and chorus. Any child between the ages of 4 and 14 who presents himself or herself to Mr. Chambers on the afternoon of the ball with a ticket from the box office may be considered an active member of the company, and the long program of dances which will begin after the performance of the pantomime will be open to all of them. Children who live out of town are especially invited to come to the ball and join the dancing on the floor after the prince and princess are happily united.

As it is being rehearsed the Cinderella ball will be a pantomime with ballet of many figures. The ensemble is to be a picturesque scene, taken from fairyland and including all of the chorus of 500 children. There will be the prince's courtiers, with their stately manners and elegant fashions; dainty fairies will disport themselves upon the green and strange little mannikins of all shapes and appearances will mingle with them. They will frolic about until the trumpets announce that his royal highness, Prince Charming, is ap-

proaching. Before their beloved sovereign the elves and fairies will bow in homage and the courtiers will dance a solemn minuet for his delectation.

Then the rumble of another coach entering the palace gates will be heard and Cinderella in her pumpkin carriage, guarded by her fairy godmother, will enter the hall. The coach which she will ride is a marvelous creation of Chief Property Man Renze's skill, and no Cinderella in these days or of old ever rode in a finer one. Eight brownies will drag the vehicle and there will be a coachman in cocked hat and white wig and two tiny footmen up behind. When Cinderella enters the hall at first she will be but the unknown maiden, but her identity will be disclosed by the trying on of the little slipper and she will be taken by Prince Charming into his royal arms.

When she is crowned princess, to reign forever beside her handsome husband, one would think that her happiness would be quite complete, and no doubt it will be. The interested spectators, however, will not be denied one glimpse of the delights which the prince provides for the amusement of his bride and the royal dancers, gifted with all the graces and beauties of magic and romance, will appear before the happy pair.

Five little maidens in Spanish costume will begin the ballet with a figure called "La Cicola." It is a dashing Spanish skirt dance which the children execute with most astounding skill and finish. These Spanish girls will retire to their corner beneath the Spanish flag and the Dutch girls will come on. There will be four of these and their dance is one of gaiety and fun. They, too, will retire to a flag of their country. When the Dutch jig is over four Highland lassies with plaid and kilts will give a vigorous and enthusiastic Highland jig. The rousing abandon of this dance loses nothing in the hearty rendition which the children give it and their number is bound to please the Scots who may happen to be present.

Another Spanish dance and then a taborino figure, both of which are similar to the "La Cicola," will come next and stand beside the prince's throne to make way for the "Garland," a very elaborate figure in which a number of children will take part. When the garlands are finally unwound Miss Marie Snowden will be disclosed and will dance alone. "The Bursting of the Rose," a second elaborate and beautiful number, will then follow, and the solo dances will be given by Gretchen Langdon, a diminutive miss who dances difficult and intricate steps with a delightful skill. Then the court dancers will once more move in their slow, graceful steps and the ballet will come to an end with a grand finale called "America."

An American flag will be carried out across the floor toward the throne by six little girls, who will jig as they go to the tune of "Dixie." The energetic freedom with which the children dance this jig denotes a very enthusiastic patriotism, and when it is over the whole crowd of elves, fairies, brownies and the dancers will rush to the center of the floor with a grand hurrah and a final cheer. Then the floor will be given over for the regular program, in which all children are to take part as ordinary mortals.