

True Story of How "Paprika Schnitzel" Came to Be a Show



FRED PAFFENRATH started it, and in a large measure is more to blame than anyone else connected with the whole affair. Of course, this may seem like cowardly evasion of personal responsibility, yet the position is assumed with due respect for most illustrious precedent. If you will go back as far as the Garden of

Eden you will find that the paternal parent of the human family evaded his own share in the disaster in much the same way. Adam laid it onto Eve because she couldn't kick, and Paffenrath is so deep in the hole that we might as well stick him for the whole shooting match and have it over with.

It all began in a little private dining room one afternoon, when the snow lay deep on the ground, and seven men more or less interested in Ak-Sar-Ben met around a table on which there was something to eat, and something to smoke, and where a waiter could easily get in with something to drink. The debate that followed around that board would have been of immense value if it only could have been preserved to history. Seven men sat together at that luncheon, and when it broke up it had developed that there were seven irrevocably fixed ideas as to what the next show would do, and an outsider might have thought that seven long friendships had been hopelessly sundered. At least, some of the language used and some of the threats made would have warranted such a conclusion.

Paffenrath called the meeting because he was full of the notion. Gould Dietz was called in because it was desirable to stick the board of governors for the price of the lunch. Gus Renze was brought along for the reason that some time during the game everybody has to see Gus. "Dad" Weaver was there, because no one knew at that time he was going to jump the game and go to Kansas City. McCullough was there because Paffenrath and Weaver thought they might hurt his feelings if they didn't ask him to come in, and George West was there because his long experience has made him sort of dean of the guild. Each of this sextette is perfectly gentle and tractable, when he has his own way, but neither of them was ever known to agree with anyone else as to anything. Prof. Kratz was also present, but he was so thoroughly abashed by the language he heard and the demeanor assumed at one time around the board that his presence hardly counted. But the seed was sown

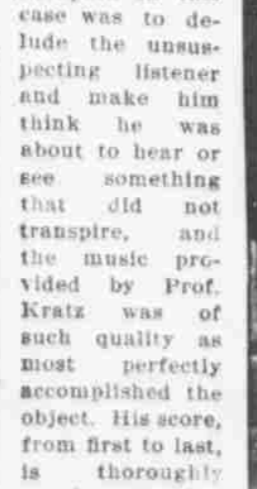


MAN EATERS.

and the Paffenrath idea took root that day and flourished even beyond the hopes of any of those present. This was some time later, because no further consultation was held, and no general session of this august body has ever been convened since. The next debate occurred in Gus' private of If you have never to get into execu Gus on the show bly imagine what Gus is as full of of flesh, and the catch as the oth times they are as elusive. But th all worked, tog example, during forenoon session, the writer was same time, the rika Schnitzel," the torrent of rant and expres- from Gus, and It would not inte count the various steps, but finally zel" had been, and music. And to stop right here served tribute to ago demonstrated else knew that he could write music for an opera. The opera in this case was to de- lude the unsuspect- ing Hstener and make him think he was about to hear or see something that did not transpire, and the music provided by Prof. Kratz was of such quality as most perfectly accomplished the object. His score, from first to last, is thoroughly the highest praise. Very few of the



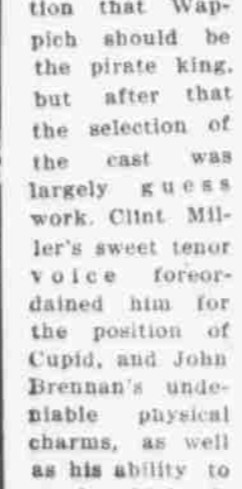
THE FIRST MATE.



VILLAGERS.



BEDELIA.



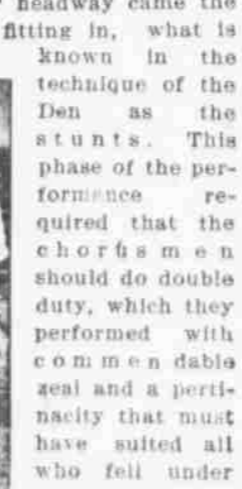
MAESTRO HERR HAMMERSTRAIN-OVITCH VON RAFFEN-PATHSKEL.



BURGOMASTER.



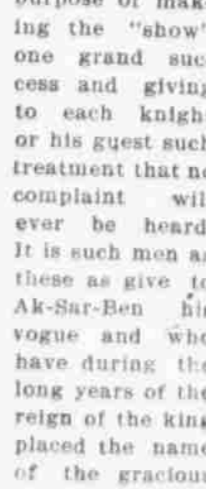
PIRATE CHIEF.



PLAIN PIRATE.



JUST FIERCE.



PIRATE CHIEF.

the whole affair is history now. He turned the cast upside down and the company inside out. He took over the in- complete libretto and, with able strokes of his type writer, knocked off the rough corners, smoothed out the ragged gaps and filled in with well chosen words, carefully selected jokes and witticisms of the rarest sort, until he produced a book that was well worth the money. When he got through he had a manuscript enough for two, or perhaps three, comic operas. Apparently he did not know how easy it was until he got under headway. Then he had to work overtime to get the thing back to something like decent time limits. After he had done all the real work of ers and players him. But Paffenrath has a most and knows how donna as success- fied Maurice Grau merstein. Just he keeps a se- ceded in con- every one of this on of operatic her part was of great aggregat stars that his or one on which the rested, and by interest organ- crops that could effect. He rehe season and out the play and aft any triumph come from the Paffenrath. It to figure out the stunts that would the question was who could carry out the idea, and right here is where good luck came to the assistance of good management.

of this he began getting the sing- rath has a most and knows how donna as success- fied Maurice Grau merstein. Just he keeps a se- ceded in con- every one of this on of operatic her part was of great aggregat stars that his or one on which the rested, and by interest organ- crops that could effect. He rehe season and out the play and aft any triumph come from the Paffenrath. It to figure out the stunts that would the question was who could carry out the idea, and right here is where good luck came to the assistance of good management.

It was a matter of predestina- tion that Wap- pich should be the pirate king, but after that the selection of the cast was largely guess work. Clint Mil- ler's sweet tenor voice foreordained him for the position of Cupid, and John Brennan's unde- niable physical charms, as well as his ability to reach high C, made him an ideal Paprika

from the very jump-off. Jack Alvord couldn't have put his resonant baritone to better uses than he did this summer, and as the agent for Captain Kidd he has scored a lasting hit. Several enthusiastic young persons were given an opportunity to try out as the burgomaster, the oldest inhabitant and the night watchman, but it was not until practically time to raise the curtain that Vance was discovered to be the man wanted for the burgomas- ter and Hamilton

so readily that one might easily imagine him to be the reincarnation of some mediaeval constable who went about the streets after nightfall, disturbing the slumbers of the peaceful burghers and assuring them that the night was dark and stormy, but all was well within the city. Miller added the little touches so essential to fit the 8 o'clock condition to the mediaeval situation that his performance never failed to bring

the laugh. Bob Manley, Ben Cotton, Oscar Lieben, Frank McShane, Alec Reed, John Lund and Charlie Karbach came along as after-thoughts, but each made good in the part assigned him, and "Paprika Schnitzel" was made a go. The chorus was a much easier proposition, for it turned out that volunteers with singing voices were plentiful enough. It is quite likely that a large majority of these did not quite understand what they were going against or they probably would have not been so eager. It was no snap to go out there night after night, giving up all other pleasures for the purpose of rehearsing, and yet these young men did it all summer long. They had to rehearse as faithfully as any company that ever appeared before

their lines, business and music cues as well as any throng of "merry-merril stood in line bef- er's office on pay this the only endured. A hott stage at the Den imagined, unless dressing room. Young men rehe long with a fidel scarcely can be ferath's ambit- less and took the ing some new fe successive perfor were interpol- vised and every change was great thing for was something performers. If salary it is certa rath would have of one strike a but as the work "for the joy of stage director's pleasant way-of getting around people was sufficiently potent to keep up the team work from the beginning to the end. After the opera was under headway came the further task of fitting in, what is known in the technique of the Den as the stunts. This phase of the performance required that the chorus men should do double duty, which they performed with commendable zeal and a pertinacity that must have suited all who fell under their tender ministrations. It was here that Wap-

pick shone as he never had before, while Cotton, Manley, Lieben, Lund, Reed and others formed a galaxy of scintillating stars whose radiance nightly illumined the path of a squad of befogged wanderers to the brightest realms of light. If the original notion of the stunts lacked anything the tergite inventiveness of these gentlemen was sufficient to supply the things, and no one was heard to complain, after the curtain went down, that he hadn't gotten all that was coming to him.

When the opera had taken form Miles Greenleaf got into the game and contributed some special songs and speeches that added greatly to the general affect of the whole. His well known penchant for humorous expression was never better exhibited than in his contribution to the book of the play.

Here also comes in the musician. Dimmick the faithful and his bunch of fiddlers and drummers and horn blowers become so well accustomed to the doings at the Den that it is second nature to them, but this season they really had something to do. The old-time tune of "Turkey in the Straw" was abolished and in its stead was set down the sweet harmonies written by Prof. Kratz for the embellishment of the "opera." These were performed in mastery style and the careful watching of the leader enabled the singers always to have at least the right music cue, so that any possible hitch in the performance might not be chargeable to the orchestra. Oscar Lieben not only took part in the play, but attended to the costuming, and nightly gave instructions to a large class in the gentle but necessary art of "making up" for appearance before the footlights. The wonderful crop of beards and scars and other things that Oscar produced on the faces of some of Omaha's most popular young men were real triumphs.

If any added tribute were needed to attest the spirit of Ak-Sar-Ben it is furnished by the fidelity of the men who give over their time during the summer to make the show a success. The "working crew," as it is known, has grown from season to season along with the aspirations of the organization, and the importance of the "show" at the Den, but each season has seen a new addition of volunteers as eager and as willing as any of the veterans. Of these latter many have stood by the ship for so many years that it would be an occasion for wonder if they were to be missed. Some have been there from the very beginning, while the service of others dates back ten or a dozen years. But the newest man in the lot enters into the game just as earnestly and does his part just as faithfully as does the oldest. It is not all for fun with them, for the spirit of Ak-Sar-Ben is not all fun. It has a serious aspect, and the working crew grasps this fact, also, and does its part to make the happenings at the Den impressive as well as pleasant. Night after night these men rehearse and drill, early and late, that they may each become proficient in the part assigned, and that the whole may go with the snap and dash necessary to success. Sometimes the work is really arduous and it is before the doors Monday night to knights and their bers of the work busy. Costumes must be donned; night this last new part had to be committed, some rehearsed, new learned and old the changes made the play. All this work. But the went through by the greatest made the "opera" Ben one of the of all the king's the "Working a bunch of enthu credit to the im an author, a com- tor. From Barney on the front door, clear back to Louie and Billy at the back end of the hall, the whole They are courteous and careful, and work with the single-hearted purpose of mak- ing the "show" one grand suc- cess and giving to each knight or his guest such treatment that no complaint will ever be heard. It is such men as these as give to Ak-Sar-Ben his vogue and who have during the long years of the reign of the king placed the name of the gracious ruler of Quivera at the very pinna- cle of fame. McC.



JENNIE, THE PROGRAM GIRL, AND HER PIRATE LOVE; NOTE THE YELLOW RIBBON AROUND JENNIE'S NECK.



PAPRIKA AND CUPID.



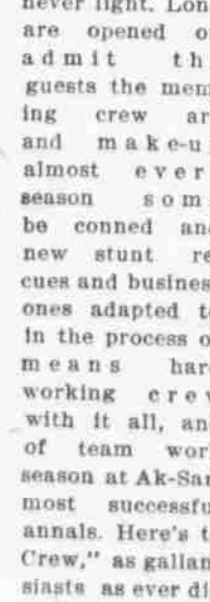
TWO OF THE HUSTLING KIDS.



WEDDING GUESTS.



PIRATE CHIEF.



PIRATE CHIEF.



PIRATE CHIEF.