

One Night of Samson's Surkus and Great After Concert

THE secret is out. Just what was that affair out there at the den your wife inferred was a racy, slightly off color entertainment? Husband, turn this into the hands of Friend Wife, tell her to read every word and then ask her to forgive and repent. You here are vindicated by a description as near graphic as space will allow. Here, it will be endeavored to give her and those who were not there a picture of those glorious Monday nights at the den, those nights that you innocently enjoyed to the utmost oftentimes until the clock struck twelve.

After first denying for the sake of your wife that there was anything in those shows which might in any way discolor your lily white character and thus again place you in best repute with your family, the description will proceed.

Prof. Dimick, start your band out there in front of the Den for the lady—that hand of yours, brilliantly vested in scintillating vermilion coats and hatted with the light yellow mitres or whatever they were. Start them playing "Everybody's Doing It," "The Ragtime Violin," or some other of those pieces you



A DREAM.

played every Monday night, while the thousands of laughing men crowded by your players into the Den.

And the crowd there—set them in line. They're coming twenty-five abreast, pushing and shoving. Why? Where are they coming from? Oh, can't you see the street cars lined along Twenty-first street—one right behind the other. Look! There come some more automobiles. Say, Mr. Policeman, get them in line. There's a little room down there on the corner of the lot. Of course, that block square south of the Den is thronged with them and so is the fifty feet east of the building and so is the curbing for two blocks down, but there's some space; put them in there. That's right, let them back in, side by side.

Now Lady, have you your ticket ready? The yellow one, printed in red ink. There it is, that one—

Annual Ticket, 1912. THE KNIGHTS OF AK-SAR-BEN Mrs. Once Suspicious Wife. Is Entitled to a Seat in the Reserved Section Under the Big Canopy. CHARLES H. PICKENS, President.

All right, come on, just follow this crowd. You don't need to go to the right on entering the door. That sign there is to direct the candidates for initiation. You may turn to the left; you are a member. Just go through that turnstile there as you show Mr. Charles Karbach your ticket. He will let you in and the next man will hand you one of those long colored bills, a program. You can't tell much from the program. It's just a lot of nonsense that Robert Manley wrote partly to show off his humor and partly to give you an idea that the show inside is somewhat related to a circus. Get your button from Walter Thomas or L. B. Beindorf and follow the short passageway and—there it is, look! The circus! It's about to begin. Gee, the sight almost takes your breath away, doesn't it?

Directly in front of you, in a space 100 feet wide and 300 feet long, is the reserved section referred to on your season ticket. It is packed from front to back and from end to end with costless men, sitting, their mouths wide in wonderment and slightly curved up at the corners, all gazing in front of them, into the big arena, the one ring of the Ak-Sar-Ben circus.

Their eyes at first fall upon the long banner strung across the top of the tent, on which is emblazoned in large red letters, "Visitors Welcome." You bet they are welcome, and if at first they are not cognizant of the fact, only a few moves of the initiation team, which starts the lively show, will impress it upon their minds indelibly.

head facing the audience. It makes the entire circuit as gracefully as a thoroughbred can. Directly behind him is the red coated band which you saw before the show giving a concert out in front. They are walking exactly in step and blowing sounds through the various instruments that are very like something you have heard before, but you just can't tell. Probably it could be told that the piece is "Heart and Flowers" if the callopo would quit piping for a second and the animals in the dressing room would hush their roars for a time.

But you don't care for music, anyway. There's too much excitement and noise. Music is to be heard when there is a long haired man going through Delart movements to its time and Prof. Dimick is a short puffed person without even the conventional fuzzy hat and the twirling baton. All he and his men are trying to do is to add glamour to the auspicious entree and with the noises joining in from the dressing room and the blatant howls of approval from the vast audience they do it.

Yip! Yee! There's an elephant. No, two elephants! See them lumbering through the door? My, they're fine specimens of elephanthood. Aw say, those ain't real elephants. Look at 'em dancing to the music; keeping right in time and swinging back and forth. Shucks, you can't tell me they're honest-to-goodness elephants. They may look it, but no elephant can do that—why of course, look at the program: "Elephant No. 1—William Chuda, George Heintze, Howard Day and Harry Cook. Elephant No. 2—P. O. Jennings, L. Levy, Ben Whitney and J. W. McDonald." That explains it. These young men playing the roles of elephant entrails form the mechanism that makes them move so. Pretty good, eh?

And the giraffes—Yes, they are the same way. The program says: "Giraffe—C. Phelps, H. Schraeder, C. A. Graves, A. W. Johnson, J. G. Glasshoff and E. H. Osborn." Better giraffes never danced the bear cut. Neither have better canals swung the cubanola glide than those within which were F. H. Turner, R. Jensen, A. L. Lemon and T. W. Lauritzen. These, though, were not the most conspicuous animals in this grand entree parade. Above all there bucked the wild steer and the trick mule and rocked the rocky boat. Equipped with ingenious mechanical device this steer was far superior to any long horn that ever dodged the larist on the Wyoming plains. Atopped by an innocent candidate for initiation into the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben, this maddened beast pitched about the arena violently enough to make its rider believe on concluding the ride that his heart, stomach, liver and lungs had indulged in a game of pussy-wants-a-corner. The steer was set upon a low, rolling table and pulled about the ring by a band of handy men. A special crew was required to engineer him about and make him go through the agonizing contortions Dan Whitney, Verne Miller, Harry Foster and F. A. Martin usually did this work. The trick mule was operated by a different squad, E. L. Potter, H. Peterson, William Schellberg and A. L. Pietria, while the rocking boat usually was manned by E. T. Gillespie and F. P. Shoemaker.

These above named animals furnished most of the action of the opening pageant. For a real laugh there was the milk wagon driven by Frank Drexel. Where Samson ever got the horse that drew that wagon about during the season is a mad conjecture. Undoubtedly the blast came from nowhere civilized man has lived, for civilized man never before saw such a quadruped moving about slandering horsedom as it did by purporting to be one of those animals. The expression "as crooked as a corkscrew" would begin to describe the general topography of this beast. It was as crooked as a barrel of snakes and in the way of its back as much milk could be carried as might be placed in the wagon it pulled. Now that's considerable sway.

No wonder that animal was taken from the wagon a short time after Colonel Theodore's convention was held in Chicago and remodeled into a bull moose. In its natural appearance it looked as much like a bull moose as it did a horse, anyway. So, naturally, when horns and nose glasses were placed upon it and Ed Thompson, disguised at Colonel Theodore, came marching into the ring with it every one was de-lighted with this, the only bull moose in extant and captivity. But the bull moose was only introduced a few times. Being a political subject, it was needed only on special occasions when it was thought some politicians might be present. In the same respect was the life and death of Jim Swift's act.

Up until the conclusion of the Baltimore convention, Swift made a great impression every performance by parading in front of the audience with a houn' dawg, dragging at the end of the string with the tail between his legs. Swift sang the "Houn' Dawg" song in excellent voice while the dog covered at his side. Probably more people regretted the defeat of Champ Clark because it meant the abandonment of this act than would otherwise have mourned the Missouri's loss. But it was a political subject, and like the bull moose, it had to go, after interest in the thing it symbolized had waned.

All these were good "laugh getters," as the professional showman would say.

Then—watch them straighten in their seats. From the south end of the den, from a room in which they have realized there has been considerable activity, there comes a single bewhiskered horseman. A thrilling whistle blows loudly and reverberates from every corner of the building and—hooray—the circus has begun! The bewhiskered horseman heads the grand entree parade. A highbred horse he has, too, coming into the ring right from the start, prancing sideways. Throughout the whole season this horse never walked straight, but keeping its



HOGANINSKI THE GREAT THROWING THE BULL.

They were in a class with the clowns. And by the way, the clowns of the Ak-Sar-Ben circus proved funnier beyond a doubt than any with any regular circus ever seen in Omaha. There was a great bevy of them and not a one lacked the essential qualities of humor required of a man who is hired to make a fool of himself. They were captained by Ed Thompson, with C. R. Docherty, an imitable little Irishman, as lieutenant. Among the list appears the names: E. O. Peterson, N. F. Hinckley, H. E. Mahaffey, James Swift, U. McDonough, E. O. Royce, E. N. Kenny, B. J. Drummond, William Stryker, George Ochsleben, Harold Thompson, Edward Johnson, D. Berlin, H. M. Anderson, L. F. Hildum, T. W. Lauritzen, L. S. Dadds and Ernest Bell.

The clowns did not appear in the grand entree parade. They were in the ring

as soon as they finished making up in the dressing room. Just remember, the parade hasn't passed yet. You haven't seen the cage of wild simps and boobs, the corned hippopotamus and the other animals. Well, they are just men, picked out from the bunch of candidates in the menagerie room and locked into the cages for a system characterized as "balling out." They are innocent men who have been thrown into the cages labeled in those edifying terms. Paraded about the arena thus labeled they generally are the targets of their friends' derision. That is a part of their initiation.

The callopo which you have heard since first you entered the tent is now screaming and screaming its way back to the menagerie room, its mission over. It was somebody's happy thought. Made of a line of inharmonious whistles which were blown by compressed air, it supplied sufficient noise to entertain the whole north end of the city. Like the band, however, it added eclat to the grand entree parade.

In that way it may be classed with William Waploch, who as a ringmaster would lend eclat to any kind of ceremony. He is dressed in a swallow-tail coat, which, separated by his enormous ebombonnet, allows a glaring show of red vest. To all this scenery about him is added several diamonds, as the recipes say, "the size of a walnut," and a mustache that is built on the proportion of those of cats, who are said to possess them for the purpose of measuring holes they may crawl through.

This disguise startles you so you are prepared to receive anything from him, and when his mouth opens up and from

the depths of his lungs bellows forth a conglomeration of verbiage you perk up in your seat and prepare for whatever it is he is announcing.

It may be the famous Captain Fry, gunman, or it may be the soldiers with their cannon. In the excitement, although you hear him, you can't catch it. If it is Captain Fry you soon realize that he has announced an act, the like of which you never saw before. The captain is from South Omaha, and with native breezy steps he enters the ring and lays his broad-brimmed, black hat on a table. He is then prepared to shoot the tartar off your teeth without injuring the enamel. He doesn't do it, however. In your teeth you haven't the same contrivance that enables him to shoot out the electric lights at the other end of the tent. Ringmaster Waploch shouts out a few lines about how the captain once was a brave frontiersman and in the early days often walked into the village saloon and shot out the lights to show his marksmanship. After such a lie eh presents the captain to shoot out the electric bulbs in the tent, which the captain does. At this you sit in amazement and ask yourself why this man isn't traveling with an itinerant show and receiving a drayload of pay envelopes every Saturday night. The secret has been kept well, but now that it is out, it is strictly legitimate to tell it. By each electric bulb is a mouse trap all sprung before the show starts. When Captain Fry pulls the trigger of his revolver, a hired man on the outside of the tent pushes a button and springs the traps, which naturally shatter the bulbs.

In a similar way does he fool the candidates by preparing to shoot a glass bulb from one of their heads. A man who has been trained in the secrets of the William Tell act is always on hand to volunteer his services. When the ring-



ONE REAL WRESTLING MATCH.

through the doors of the porch, two of which came out directly in front. As the candidates passed through these doors, hung as saloon blinds are hung, their arms invariably jerked away. The inner side of the doors had been lined with brass which was charged with electricity supplied by a wire from the rafters. More laughable than this was the door at the end of the incline from the porch. The initiates invariably ran down this incline to the door being opened to them by a man outside. Strong electric lights above this door blinded them to the screen wiring which filled in and as a consequence the audience was kept in a continual uproar as the innocent candidates smashed their straw hats and bumped their heads against the invisible wires. They had to be pulled out of the runway through a curtained door at the side.

These things were prepared for the embarrassment of the initiates. The trained elephants, Sarah Bernhardt and Lillian Russell, were feature devices in this line. After marching around the ring, Sarah Bernhardt stalked over to seven candidates standing beside the ring, each carrying a bucket of water. As the band played, "How Dry I Am," Sarah drank all the water from the buckets, backed away and through her trunk sent the water in a fine spray upon the candidates. Lillian frightened ten men by walking over them as they lay on a canvas stretched over the sawdust in the ring.

The "oracle" or "modern monarch of the plains" followed this line of fun. The oracle is several times larger than the life-sized steer, who rides in an automobile, which he steers into the ring and stops in front of the initiates. He answers questions which the ringmaster puts to him by nodding and shaking his head. He is asked if he is the cause of the high cost of living, and if the opportunity is open to all to raise his kind in Nebraska. As a conclusion he is asked to "cough up," which he does by opening his big mouth and blowing corn and heavy rain over the candidates.

Other features of the show are purely for entertainment, without a sell or practical joke attached. The drills of the horsemen, and a rube wrestling match in



FLOWER OF THE ZENANA.

this category are marvels for entertainment. Alex Reed captains the horsemen as they ride into the ring, each carrying his own horse, and go through drills in the center. In the list are Charles Metz, Jr., William Karbach, Chester Weeks, R. F. Heyden, C. Belden, C. Bergman, George Snell, Albert Zimmer, M. E. Larson, L. P. Campbell, R. A. Frost and W. J. Shaw.

The wrestling bout, between H. G. Counsman and H. R. Johnson, was a headliner. It was a burlesque on the average wrestling match and good enough for the professional stage.

This, gentle reader, is the Ak-Sar-Ben circus. The concert has not been announced. It is not announced until the circus is over, and then, unlike every other circus, the announcer does not end his speech with "a dime, ten cents." Like everything else at the den, it is free.

A better concert was never a part of any circus that ever traveled, and while you sat and watched it circus hands were not tearing down the tent around you.

Of course, there was a concert. What would a circus be without a concert? It would be but a hollow mockery, and you bet that Ak-Sar-Ben has no hollow places. So, right when folks were getting most interested in the athletic stunts that were pulled off by the performers on the tankard of the arena, came the stentorian voice of the ringmaster:

"L-a-a-d-d-l-l-e-e-s-s-a-a-n-d-g-e-e-n-n-l-l-e-e-e-m-m-e-n-n-I am requested to announce that immediately after the conclusion of the performance in the big ring before you we will give a concert on a stage especially erected for that purpose, at which will appear some of the greatest performers of the world—renowned singers and dancers, as well as all the wonders of the world shown you in the smaller pavilions, and which for this occasion will be presented on the platform before you in all their surprising wonder. Our performance is not half over, ladies and gentlemen, but I am requested to make this announcement at this time that you may know of the treat that we have in store for you. In honor of our visit to your city, we have reduced the price of admission for the day and date only, and have fixed the charge for this wonderful concert performance at half price, only one dime. Gentlemen, anyone wishing tickets to remain for the concert may get them from them."



SOME EQUESTRIENNE.

When Bobby Burns was telling of Tam O'Shanter's experience on Halloween at Alloway's laird haunted kirk, he came to the dance of Marnie, the young witch, who discarded all garments but her cuttysark, and wrote:

But have my muse her wing main lower— Sic flights are quite beyond her power. So, exactly what took place at that concert will never be told; it may suffice to say that memories of that dear old Midway were revived by the entrance of a marching column in oriental garb, with pipes and tambourines, the females of the party shamelessly unveiled, after the western fashion, but clinging to a scantiness of garb, after the eastern; and they paraded the arena, the while discoursing that never-to-be-forgotten strain to which some patriot has fitted the words: She has never seen the Streets of Cairo— She was but a simple country maid.

At last these had gathered on the platform and here was given a performance, the like of which was not known elsewhere. Even a night of Scheherazade's best effort was but tame compared to this. If the concert did not Bruce McCulloch of South Omaha, who furnished the lyrics and ditties and ballads sung, the choruses roared, and the quips and jests sprung on the unsuspecting. As a librettist Captain McCulloch is the real thing, and when he gets tired of putting down records of live stock sales he can make a name for himself by turning out musical comedy. Part of his services for the season consisted of furnishing a new set of verses for each performance, so that the performers themselves didn't always know what was coming off, but it was new, crisp and pat, and enjoyed by all. The foibles of each succeeding set of candidates were touched upon, each visiting town got a bit of satire, of good-humored comment, and all went for the purpose of making the concert the best entertainment Samson ever set forth at the den.

Henry W. Dunn forgot to be chief of police in order to give the beauty of his big voice to the concert; Joe Brennan, who won his laurels as Paprika some years ago, gathered more glory for himself as a dark-eyed charmer of the zenana; Conover and Thompson, Boyles and Lieben and many another glistened in the spotlight at this gorgeous performance, and for once in his life Frank Fitch was permitted to go as far as he liked, and no one will ever say he can't go some when he gets under headway.

Those who assisted in making the concert the biggest success of the entire history of Ak-Sar-Ben's entertainments at the den were: Matt H. W. Dunn, First Councillor—Joe Latsch, Second Councillor—A. J. Alvord, Keeper Royal Secretary—F. W. Fitch, Shade Tree—Cliff Boyles, Dancing Girls—John Brennan, E. N. Livingston, D. F. Meicher, J. W. Johnson, A. W. Duffy, E. J. Drummond, H. O. Benford, L. S. Dadds, Retinue—M. J. Cich, F. W. Whittemore, W. W. Harmon, Burd F. Miller, Executions—B. E. Johnston, Ed Bierman, Dean Berlin, Burt Miner, Fan Bearers—F. H. Hinckley, R. E. Johnson, Oriental Band—Burd F. Miller, E. Dreibus, Joe Marrow, A. M. Newell, Treasure Secretary—R. D. Latsch, John Pedersen, Director—Oscar Lieben, R. B. Harberg.

Roster of Ak-Sar-Ben Working Crew

Alden, Charles	Drexel, F.	Karbach, William	Petre, Petersoh, H.
Anderson, H. M.	Eisele, H.	Kass, C.	Phelps, C. C.
Alvord, A. J.	Erickson, E.	Karbach, C. E.	Peterson, P.
Beindorf, L.	Evernden, H.	Kiplinger, E. J.	Paffenrath, F.
Berlin, D.	Foster, Harry	Larsen, M. E.	Petrie, H. F.
Bell, E.	Fitzpatrick, G.	Lemon, A. L.	Pederson, J. W.
Borshelm, L. H.	Frost, R. A.	Lauritzen, F. W.	Pherson, J. W.
Belden, C.	Fry, A. H.	Latesch, Joe	Palmer, Ed
Boyles, Clifford	Fitch, F. W.	Lapesch, R. D.	Reed, Alex
Brennan, John	Graves, C. A.	Leben, Oscar	Ramm, J. P.
Benford, H. O.	Glasshoff, J. G.	Lane, W. E.	Reed, K. F.
Bierman, Ed	Gillespie, E. J.	Lehman, E.	Reese, R. E.
Bonewitz, S. L.	Greer, L. J.	Liby, I.	Stryker, William
Bertrand, Alex	Gerke, William	McDonough, V.	Scherlberg, William
Bartlett, W. C.	Gallagher, Ben	McMahon, V.	Schraeder, H.
Chuda, William	Heintze, G.	Millard, V.	Simpson, F.
Cook, Harry	Heintze, W. H.	Martin, F. A.	Swift, James
Corn, James	Heyden, R. F.	McDonald, J. W.	Soderberg, A. E.
Crawford, William	Hinckley, J.	Metz, Herman	Swoboda, F.
Caspar, J.	Hogan, J. M.	Maloney, Charles	Sherwood, W. W.
Campbell, L. P.	Harberg, R. B.	Mets, Charles Jr.	Scott, O. C.
Counsman, H. G.	Horte, L. H.	Melohar, D. F.	Shoemaker, J. R.
Cich, M. J.	Herman, John J.	Millard, B. F.	Small, George
Conover, S. P.	Isberg, H. A.	Miner, J.	Shaw, W. J.
Cady, Walter	Japson, R.	Morrow, Joe	Stack, F.
Collomer, F.	Jennings, P. O.	McCulloch, Bruce	Thompson, Ed
Campbell, C. C.	Johanson, J. W.	McCune, O. E.	Turney, F. H.
Drummond, B. J.	Johanson, H. R.	McGrough, B.	Thomas, W.
Day, Howard	Johanson, J. W.	Newell, A. M.	Van Kuran, A. J.
Docherty, C. R.	Johanson, B. E.	Newman, Ed	Whittemore, F. C.
Dadds, L. S.	Johanson, R. E.	Ochsleben, G.	Waploch, William
Dermody, D. D.	Jacobson, F. A.	Osborne, E. H.	Wallway, F.
Dunn, H. W.	Judson, H. C.	O'Brien, Ed	Whitney, D.
Duffy, A. W.	Jackson, A. J.	Pric, M. H.	Weeks, C.
Dreifus, P. J.	Johnson, Ed	Potter, E. L.	Zimmer, A.
Dillon, M.	Kinney, E. M.		

master announces that a candidate is wanted for a hero, circus hands rush into the candidate stand and attempt to take some of them by force. If any beside the trained men had volunteered his services, possibly Captain Fry would have been somewhat embarrassed.

But as was said, the regular man is always there and he gladly prepares to be a martyr. Captain Fry places the glass bulb on top of his head, takes infinite eye measurements, then turns to mark the correct number of paces before ready to shoot. All the time the crowd holds its breath. After the captain has turned his back to the mark, a handkerchief is tied over his eyes, an added precaution against his seeing the mark. Then slowly raising his revolver above his head and lowering it at about the proper grade, he pulls the trigger and the bulb on the man's hat shatters. A rubber bulb in the man's pocket was squeezed by him, the compressed air from which set off the trap that broke the glass bulb. Simple.

jump from the bench and the audience sees what has happened. Up from the bench there sprays a full stream of water, from end to end.

This trickery was a source of much amusement to the regular attendants at the circus. Some knights went every Monday night for nothing else than to get a good laugh at these men who received the brunt of the many practical jokes in the ritual of the initiation.

The haunted house which brought the circus proper to a laughable close was one of the most interesting devices ever rigged up at the Den. To the audience outside the ring it looked like a house. A porch was stretched across its front which sloped down on one side. Back of the house was the platform which had been rolled in place. The candidates were ushered from their seats in the ring to places upon this platform. They were stood in line ready for the walk through the "haunted house."

The audience could see them emerge

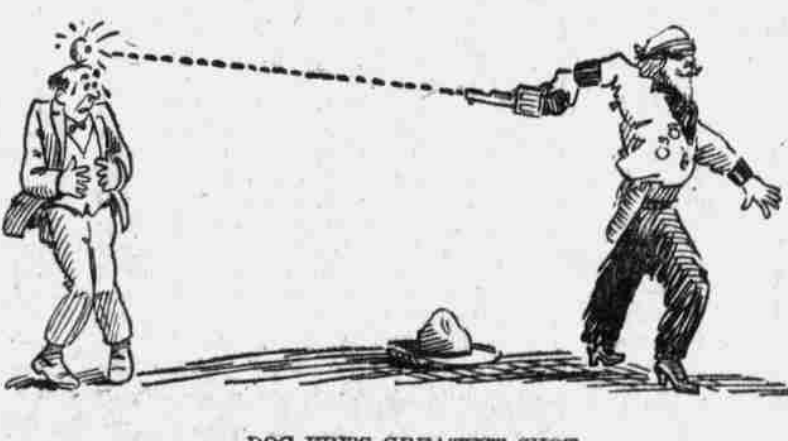


FEAT OF THE TRAINED ELEPHANT.

Isn't it? But few that saw the trick knew but what it was on the square. Captain Fry's act was begun by his ringing the bell's eyes attached to the coat tails of V. D. Dermody, Fred Stack and L. H. Greer, who were brought into the ring on a rolling stock (rolling stock here does not refer to railroad). What is meant is an old fashioned stock such as once was used for punishing witches. With their heads and hands fastened in them, these men were carried in on a wagon, the bull's eyes on their coat tails being the targets for Captain Fry. The audience usually suspected trickery in this, but after he had shot out the lights, they credited him with having sent real bullets at the men.



PART OF THE PARADE.



DOC FRY'S GREATEST SHOT.