

One Night at the Den Was Worth a Life-Time Spent in Peace Elsewhere

How His Satanic Majesty Kept a Hotel for the Guests of the King

Some people in Nebraska actually did not get to see Samson's show at Ak-Sar-Den this year. They are rather scarce, for Samson entertained on a large scale, and set aside a dozen special nights when whole sections of the state were invited.

But after his rare entertainers gave the glad hand of chumhood, and the harpoon of initiation to some 5,000 men from all parts of the state and the United States, there still remained a few who have not seen the show and initiation. Samson can't help it. He invited most all the people on the planet, and did everything but pay their railway fare. Samson has the satisfaction of knowing that those who did not see it will always have that as the one wild, longing, pulsing yearning in their lives.

For the show and initiation at the Den are closed for the year. They are closed to give the managers of Ak-Sar-Den time to get the other big event of the year—the carnival—into shape to open on scheduled time, September 30.

Letters About the Den.

And now that some there be who have not been initiated and have not seen the show, so some there will be who will know more about it than those who have seen it. Thus we may look for some over-pious individual somewhere from the cloistered seclusion of his cage to write letters to the newspapers charging that the Den is "nothing but a harem."

Yes, it's a fact—a fellow did write such a letter about a year ago. He was a fellow who never was near the Den. He was a fellow who sat in his library, pale and bloodless, from year to year, and never got out among men. He judged all humanity from the way his dyspeptic stomach made him feel when he had the windows of the library all shut, and read dusty literature nineteen hours a day.

But he gave a great statement to the world, namely, that the Den is a "harem." He must have dug the information out of some rare old volume of Chinese classics, printed in Celestial hieroglyphics long before the days of Confucius.

Now, the newspapers, being good fellows, and knowing it is a bad thing to have stomach trouble and also that it is a great craving some people have to make statements in the public print, granted this poor fellow a little space and printed his charge.

Did Samson reply? No, Samson was too busy entertaining the thousands of boosters that each week flooded the Den to give even his favorite glance of "withering scorn" to this knocking recluse who never paid railway fare to come down and see the Den.

He is the loser, not Samson.

Although some there still are who have not been initiated, they grow more scarce year by year, for Samson entertained more at the Den this year than ever before. When his great engines of destruction were all oiled up he opened on the first Monday night in June. He entertained and initiated every Monday night for sixteen weeks and then put on an extra night for the bankers of the state on a Wednesday evening.

And while ever 5,000 outsiders took the plunge, the tickets showed that with the

HIS SATANIC MAJESTY, THE LANDLORD.



Chas. Gardiner

ment, how many laughs, how many screams of joy they are expecting, they are never disappointed.

For, within the mysterious gates, await exactly sixty-two of the most red-blooded individuals in the city of Omaha. They have masked and disguised their faces and forms in such hideous manner that scarcely a man can be found to recognize them. Amateurs? Yes, one may call them amateurs, in the sense that they do not travel as a professional troupe. But amateurs in no sense are they when it comes to putting on a first class burlesque on the comic opera order.

Yet, what of this? Can this not be seen for four bits any time in a good play house?

Nay, nay, friend. For Gus Renze, the artificer, has so built the monstrous engines of this den of mystery that the initiation, the rough rolling and man-handling of a half thousand visitors weaves itself quite naturally and altogether ingeniously into the thread of a diabolical plot.

Who does not enjoy the antics of a boy from the audience called upon the stage to add the slippery sleight-of-hand artist?

Human Interest is Strong.

How much more enjoyment, then, when the governor of the state takes the place of the small boy, when your best known banker is sat upon by a bunch of huakies, or tossed into the raging flames of perdition by a sapient mob of horned and tailed devils. How much more racy is the enjoyment when the mayor of your town is tossed by an infernal machine from a dizzy height down, down, toward a series of nets, each of which in turn are withdrawn just before he thinks he

HEAD CLERK OF THE HOTEL DU DIABLE.



James Lawrence

Omaha crowds a total of 17,628 passed through the gates during the seventeen nights. Among them were 69 bankers of the state in a single evening. Again there were 250 editors on another evening. On still another evening there were 400 traveling men. Fremont drummed up a crowd of 64 that came down in special trains on Monday evening to enjoy the initiation. Another 60 came from Lincoln one night bringing the governor of the state and his staff with them.

What is the Attraction?

It might be left to the bar of "universal conscience," as Horatio says, whether such a multitude of men will swarm to one central point, pay railway fare and stay up late at night unless there is a real attraction. Will they go in special trains to see a circus. Not so much. Will the governor take his staff out to horse races? Hardly.

But the multitude will flock to the Den.

It is the mystery that veils before they get within the gates. And then it is the fact that no matter how much entertain-

Owner of the Devil's Hotel and His Staff of "Bell Hops"



is to slight in safety. How keen grows the joy riot when you see the congressman from your district taking a wild rocky boat ride down a never ending incline, with nothing less than Krupp guns bombarding his boat while he dodges the rapids and rocks!

She Was Some Queen.

Then, too, you select a nice boy from among the visitors. You select one who always likes to have creases in his trousers. Or, on the other hand, you select one who prides himself on his physical strength—a wrestler, for example. You give him as a partner the Tango Queen, the mechanical wonder that dances automatically across the great hall

and back. Ah, she is strong, as many a husky athlete has discovered who has tried to lead the dance instead of being led in it. Yes, the boys would balk on it, but they are strapped to the Queen in order that they may not desert her right in the midst of the dance, as some would love to do, when they have tested out her strength. Ah, the wild whirl she gives the boys would make their mothers wish them at home. Yet, when all is said and done, she is but a wooden queen.

Never during the season has the Tango Queen appeared on the floor with her helpless victim but that the 2,000 men in the hall rose to their feet, roared with thunderous levity and threw their hats into the air with whoops of hilarity at

the rough handling one of their number got at the hands of the doughty dame.

At the Devil's Hotel.

Throughout all this time, for two and one-half hours, the burlesque show is in progress, and the initiations are merely made a part of an incident to the burlesque play. Thus this year, there was a chorus of devils, whose principal business was stoking the glaring coals of the infernal regions on the stage, although they sang with the head devil as well as with the night clerk of the Devil's Hotel, when he tore through the masses of his funny little song.

"I am the night clerk of the Devil's Hotel, I'm on to every little bit of scandal."

You can't hand me any con very well," etc., etc. and again, when he paraded the front of the stage with a truly diabolical grin and sang to the tune of "Get Out and Get Under," the paraphrase: "So steady up, all the sins you might commit. And then you better, better hesitate a bit. For we've got your number, your name and your number. Right down in our devilish book."

Charley Gardener this year was the head devil. And how the minor devils did step around when he appeared on the scene. Some hotel this, where the temperature was never below 50 degrees and instead of ice water, carbonic acid was served to the guests.

Chief as Chief Stoker.

Chief of Police Henry W. Dunn was the chief stoker down in the lower regions. With his red body and face covered with soot and grime, he pounced out of the hole and upon the stage and demanded his time. He refused longer to shovel coal with a snowshovel. He was tired of roasting greasers, cadets and suffragettes. He held it time for him to pull his freight. And what did he do but sing to the craziest of songs to the tune of "I'm on my way to Mandalay." Setting his words to the rhythm of this tune, he would stink. "I suppose I'm a nut, I'm a nut, I'm a nut. See my nose full of soot, full of soot, full of soot."

"I want to go to Mexico, To Cincinnati or to Buffalo. Along the pike. If you'd only let me go."

"I'm tired of Hades And its bunch of shades," etc., etc.

Maybe this is a bum song when written on paper. But Chief Dunn has a good voice. He had able backing in the chorus of devils who joined him, and many, many an encore was necessary to calm the multitude.

Others Must Help Out.

Now, in order that Samson may be enabled to pull off this show of shows every year it is necessary for a lot of every Monday night to take part in the performance. It requires no small amount of nerve to do this, for as has been well said, they risk family reputations by appearing thus in public, and not a man gets a cent of pay.

Thus Ben Thomas appeared in the roll of Grand Muffi, whose title was universally mistaken for Tough-Guy. A. W. Jefferis was grand notary and it has even been hinted that he couldn't run for congress because his time was occupied at the Den. William Wappich was grand marshal, and likely his duties were as heavy as the grand marshal of any of the grandiose lodges that maintain such a dignitary. E. L. Potter and R. L. Low were bodyguards to the Muffi. F. W. Pich was admiral, and most indecorously did he break in upon the dignified proceedings of the Muffi. George F. West and Fred Paffenrath were dubbed board of strategy and were credited with having written the musical comedy itself. Sailors before the mast were Dan Whitney, Thomas Lynch, H. Wilke and R. A. Frost. Bold lads of the rolling waves were these fellows, who manned the boats that brought candidates safely through the bombardment of German siege guns. Also right cleverly did they on occasion dance the "Sailor's Hornpipe." M. Gibson was

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