

"MR. SAMPSON OF OMAHA"

The furor created by this famous opera is recalled by the recent death of Nat Brigham who created the title role.



Mrs. Martin Cahn, the prima donna. Photo at the time by Heyn.

Farewell, oh joustiers
You may go
unto your happy
homes away.
The prize has
gone to Omaha
or Omaha
or Omaha.



"LOVE RULES THE WORLD."

Words by FRED NYE. Music by ELISA MAZZUCATO YOUNG.

Slow Waltz movement.

Love rules the world on land and sea From ple-
beian to high de-gree. Where love be-tides There joy a-
bides. Who has not felt its mys-ter-y There is no
man so poor and pale, There is no maid so wan and
frail, But love may rest With-in their breast and ten-der-
ly their peace as-sail. There is no man so poor and pale
There is no maid so wan and frail, But love may rest Within their
breast But love may rest With-in their breast. But love may
rest With-in their breast And ten-der-ly their peace as-
sail Where love be-tides There joy a-bides.

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The original "Mr. Sampson" from a recent photograph.

"KING FOR A DAY" was never in it with "Mr. Sampson of Omaha." You remember the tremendous hit which was made by Archibald Claverings Gunther's novel, called "Mr. Barnes of New York," which had such a best-seller run as to lead to a follow-up called "Mr. Potter of Texas?" There were so many "Mr. Somebody's of Somewhere" in those days that it became absolutely necessary to put a man on the literary highway to fame carrying an Omaha tag on his suitcase. That "Somebody of Somewhere" was christened "Mr. Sampson of Omaha," and instead of a hero of a novel, he made his debut in the principal role of a comic opera, a made-in-Omaha, produced-in-Omaha by Omaha talent comic opera at that. The story of "Mr. Sampson of Omaha" is recalled by the death ten days ago of Nat M. Brigham, who created the character and sang the part when this famous musical show was put on in Omaha for a run of four performances in June, 1888.

But first let us get the plot underlying the words and music of the play. It was a thriller of the thrilling kind, combining love and business, music and adventure, fun and frolic. Just transport yourself in imagination to a comfortable seat in Boyd's old opera house, that stood at the northeast corner of Fifteenth and Farnam, until it was burned down, and focus your eyes on the stage.

The scene is laid in Bulgaria. The king by prodigality has been brought to the verge of ruin. He is harassed constantly by creditors, among them Teresa, a bad debt collector with whom he falls in love, and who tenderly loves him, but who refuses him, because as his fiancée, she would be inclined to treat his indebtedness with a leniency that would amount to an injustice with her employers. The prime minister is himself ambitious to wear the crown. A possible solution of the kingdom's difficulties is suggested by the entrance of Margaret, the beautiful daughter of the prime minister, who has been reading Sir Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe," and cherishes the wish to have a tournament. This wish she imparts to the king, who at first discourages her, but finally conceives the scheme of offering her at a public tournament to the one who can show him the road to wealth. Of course, the prime minister objects strenuously, having already promised Margaret to a wealthy Bulgarian, but threatened with the public execution, he relents.

The tournament is duly arranged, and after several indifferent get-rich-quick schemes have been

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Mr. Sampson.....Mr. Nat M. Brigham
King of Bulgaria.....Mr. B. B. Young
Prime Minister.....Mr. Henry D. Estabrook
Public Executioner.....Mr. Charles L. Deuel
Court Crier.....Mr. W. B. Downing
Margaret (daughter of prime minister).....
.....Mrs. Martin Cahn
Teresa (a collector of debts).....
.....Mrs. H. D. Estabrook
Helena.....Miss Bertha Bayliss
Messenger Boy.....Miss Eva Goodall
Stage manager, Mr. W. R. Goodall
Conductor, Mr. Martin Cahn.

CHORUS.

Sopranos and Altos—
Misses:
Kate M. Ball
Anna L. Bishop
Rose H. Brady
Mellona Butterfield
Helen Copeland
Nellie M. Corby
Edith H. Crandall
Pauline L. Dewitt
Mrs. Wm. A. Redick
Mrs. G. M. Hitchcock
Tenors and Basses—
Messrs:
Edwin D. Arnold
Joseph F. Barton
Harry V. Berkeley
Revel France
Charles A. Harvey
George W. Holbrook
May Dundy
Luna Dundy
Ruth Kimball
Florence Kimball
Claire Rustin
Mary Lake
Minnie D. Rheinhardt
Julia Knight
Nettie E. Totman
Orville C. Holmes
James H. Merriman
William Peacock
Richard J. Wherry
D. H. Wheeler, jr.
A. J. VanKuren

THE SCENES.

Act I—King's Palace.
Act II—Tent arranged with spectators for tournament.
Act III—Garden in rear of Royal Palace.



is declared, and the financial result is everything that Mr. Sampson had expected. When the semblance of battle had been maintained a sufficient length of time, Mr. Sampson directs the king to proclaim peace, at the same moment telegraphing his Omaha brokers to sell short for a decline, with the result of giving him as great a profit as a bear as he had secured as a bull. The fortunes of the king and Teresa naturally hang on the fate of Mr. Sampson. Terrified by the danger which she imagines will surround the king, Teresa beseeches him not to go to war, and when he afterwards prepares to take the field in person, she attempts to destroy the bill which she had been trying to collect from him, and which represents the barrier between them and the consummation of their love. From this rashness, however, she is saved by Mr. Sampson, who receives a timely telegram from Omaha announcing the brilliant financial success of his Bulgarian war. The portrayal ends with the liquidation of the debt, the engagement of the royal personage and Teresa, the engagement of the royal of Mr. Sampson and his bride, Margaret, whose hand he had won by his shrewdness and enterprise.

Preparation for the production had absorbed the interest of local society, whose most brilliant members were in the cast or choruses, for weeks and months. The mainstay of the organization was the old Apollo club, of which B. B. Young was at that time the conductor, and he took charge of the staging of "Mr. Sampson," in addition to himself playing the role of king. His wife, known as Madame Mazzucato Young, had written the music the words being supplied by Fred Nye, one of the editors of the old Omaha Republican, the two catch melodies being "This Morning I Found a Bulgarian Pin" and a slow waltz, "Love Rules the World."

It was a large and brilliant assemblage attracted to the first night's rendition, looking forward to a rare musical treat, and without disappointment, and the contemporaneous report by The Bee's musical critic was lavish in commendation.

"Mrs. Martin Cahn as 'Margaret' had a splendid opportunity to display her wonderful musical and dramatic talent, and the manner in which she acquitted herself was simply superb. Mrs. Cahn is gifted with a splendid voice, cultivated in the highest degree, and her efforts were satisfactory in the extreme. While she sang in her wonderfully sweet voice, 'Oh Let Me Sing the Days of Old,' the audience sat in their seats spellbound, and as the

last notes died away a momentary hush fell over the vast assemblage, which a few moments later turned into a perfect storm of applause, continuing until she again responded. Mrs. Henry D. Estabrook as "Teresa," desperately in love with the king, richly merited the frequent approval bestowed on her. Her efforts were warmly appreciated, especially the dramatic ability which she displayed. While the construction of the piece did not admit of Miss Bertha Bayliss figuring as extensively as desired, she, too, was a great favorite and rendered her part with perfect facility. Nat Brigham, impersonating "Mr. Sampson" is stupendous, and represents the average Omahan abroad to a dot, with possibly one slight exception, that he is possibly slow as a lover, but no doubt he will improve in this respect. Nat is a singer, and his rendition of the selections assigned to him were more than pleasing. Mr. Young as the king made an ideal monarch, especially so when the position in which he is placed (over head and ears in debt) is considered. Mr. Estabrook is an excellent prime minister, while Charles L. Deuel as the "Public Executioner" keeps the audience in a roar of laughter by his oddities. The chorus is especially good, and did excellent work. The entire performance passed off without a single hitch, tending to show with what painstaking care those participating had been trained.

So high did local enthusiasm run that there was talk immediately of sending a company with the operetta out on the road to let the people in other cities enjoy it, to say nothing of the advertisement Omaha would derive. More sober judgment, however, concluded that the setting was too much localized, and would have to be considerably changed before it would appeal to amusement goers elsewhere. Another performance, however, was given the following spring while the "Bostonians" were here, in order that the heads of that great musical organization could see and hear it with a view to adding it to the repertoire. Still later "Mr. Sampson" was repeated out at Salt Lake City with Nat Brigham and Charlie Deuel in their original characters, but with the other roles and choruses locally supplied. Brigham afterwards located in Salt Lake City, where he was prominent in business and politics, and by appointment of President Cleveland became United States marshal for the District of Utah. Still later he gave song and lecture recitals at chautauquas and entertainment courses, and was engaged in this vocation at the time of his death. He was a big, magnificently

built, handsome man, an athlete as well as a singer. All those who knew him insisted that the character of "Mr. Sampson of Omaha" fitted him almost as well as he fitted into that character.

"I believe my acquaintance with Nat Brigham dates back further than that of anyone else in Omaha," says Hal McCord. "He and I were classmates at Westover academy in 1864 and 1875. He was a Massachusetts boy, born near Natick. I came home after my course there, while he went on to Harvard and graduated about 1880, turning up in Omaha a few years later, where we got together again. He was a jolly good happy-go-lucky fellow. I remember him in the role of 'Mr. Sampson of Omaha' very well. He was the star of the performance, and it was a star performance."

It is remarkable that of the principals in the "Mr. Sampson of Omaha" cast, Mr. Charles L. Deuel alone is still here, and active in business circles, although he has renounced the lure of the musical arena in which he used to figure. Mrs. Martin Cahn is residing in Chicago, to which city she removed with her family in the '90's. At last accounts Mr. B. B. Young was striking high notes as a Christian Science lecturer. One of Mr. Young's given names was "Brigham," and he was supposed to be in some way connected with the famous head of the Mormon hierarchy, Brigham Young, and some of the fanciful admirers of both Mr. Young and Mr. Brigham used to insist there was a relationship between the two, which, however, was never established beyond the similarity of the names. The Estabrooks are heard from periodically from New York, where Mr. Estabrook is practicing law between after-dinner orations and occasional visits with his estimable wife to relatives and old-time friends here. Mr. Fred Nye, the word-artist of the operetta, became later the news editor of the New York World, and was accidentally killed a few years ago in a Brooklyn street car mishap.

Beware the Crafty Man

Teresa:
Beware the crafty man
From distant Omaha
Who bids you, noble king,
Unless the dogs of war!
His motives are not pure,
With guile his heart is filled,
He wants to lead you forth
To battle to be killed.

Margaret:
Oh, list, your majesty,
The voice of wisdom true!
If you his counsel scorn
The deed you'll surely rue!
He comes from out the west
Like lovely Lochinvar—
He knoweth what is best—
This man from Omaha.

Sampson:
Your Majesty, I pray
Permit me to observe
That you'll declare this war
If you've a kingly nerve.
Your death you need not fear—
Nor e'en a loss of health—
'Twill be amusement fine,
And bring a pile of wealth.

Teresa:
I plead you by my love that cries,
Do not my tender prayers despise!

Margaret:
And by my love I do adjure
That you this fortune do secure.
Your fate and mine hang on the word—
Oh, let the voice of war be heard!

From Omaha or Omahay

Prime Minister:
This gentleman from Omaha
From Omaha or Omahay
Proposes, as you all have heard
To bear the tourney's prize away.
The king is pleased to think him quite
The knight that he was looking for,
Although for me I here may say
All foreigners I do abhor.

Kind friends, I'm loyal to our king,
But if at any time the crown
From that great head you choose to take,
I know an able man in town
Who loves his country as himself,
And who, if he were acting king,
Would ne'er a tourney's prize confer
Upon a loathsome foreign thing!

'Tis not for me to mention names,
'Tis not for me this reign to queer.
But were I called to show the man,
I'd plainly answer, "I am here."
Farewell, oh joustiers, you may go
Unto your happy homes away—
The prize has gone to Omaha
Or Omaha or Omahay.

The king readily falls in with the plan, war