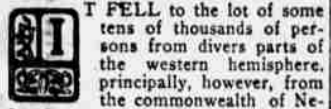


Coronado's Hysterical Bull and the Boys Who Made Him Be Good



FELL to the lot of some tens of thousands of persons from divers parts of the western hemisphere, principally, however, from the commonwealth of Nebraska, to be entertained during the course of the summer and fall, by the musical travesty known as "Coronado's Hysterical Bull" in the vast and echoing halls of King Ak-Sar-Ben's den, Twentieth and Burdette streets.

Every year tens of thousands are entertained here by some phantasmagorical production by the home talent wonders, who come scampering out of the various occupations of life every Monday evening during the season, just to entertain Nebraska's population, and let them know that an Omahan will work without pay at any time for the entertainment, enlightenment, edification and general merriment of Nebraska people.

So 282 men, boosters every mother's offspring of them, appeared at this den Monday evenings for a period of nearly four months and staged this magnificent production, half historical phantasmagoria, half blood-curdling initiation, just to give Nebraskans and other visitors to Omaha something pleasant to think about for a month or two.

The vehicle on which their work was hung was "Coronado's Hysterical Bull." Of course, the bull didn't play as big a part as did Coronado. The plot, props and effects were designed by Gus Renze. The lyrics were emitted by Miles Greenleaf. George F. West was responsible for the ritual with which the visitors were all sworn in as loyal knights of the realm. Prof. Sigmund Landsburg, conducted the music and Oscar Lieben was the architect of costumes.

Ben F. Thomas was grand mufti this year. There must always be a grand mufti in every Ak-Sar-Ben show, and the grander the man chosen, the grander the mufti. F. W. Fitch was the scribe who trailed along with the mufti to see that none of his august words were lost to posterity. Bert C. Miner and William Wappich took turns in the part of the prophet, for what is a court of a mufti without a prophet or an oracle? Oscar Lieben, J. R. Cain Jr., and William Wappich, were interchangeable in the part of the seer, with Lieben and Wappich taking the part most of the time during the season.

No sooner had the thousands of visitors been duly rolled in the stupendous barrel, marched through the concentrated cyclone on the second story of the den, hammered through plate glass windows, and bumped on dense steel screens, than the bugler announced the coming of the grand mufti. Every head in the vast hall was instantly bared, and visitors and local members alike stood at attention. The mufti with his retinue of attaches appeared, preceded by buglers, banner bearers, and in a general flourishing burst of magnificence.

When they marched to the great stage at the north end of the hall, the mufti took his position back of a small altar, bade the multitude be seated, and then and there made them all loyal knights of Ak-Sar-Ben.

Here the seer, usually Oscar Lieben, came slowly upon the scene, an aged and bent figure, leaning his tottering form upon a staff. In his hand he carried a crystal globe as big as a man's head. He tottered over to a little table, placed the globe upon it, whereupon it instantly became illuminated in bright red.

As the seer gazed into the crystal depths of the globe, he began to see again the great drama of the progress of Nebraska from a treeless desert upon which the red eye of the sun looked pitilessly for ages, to the modern day of agricultural plenty, a million and a half of people, and a high degree of civilization, educational and general culture. All these things he reviewed in a dramatic speech as he stared wild-eyed into the bright red crystal. As if his eye was sweeping the ages, his oratory slashed through the centuries, and brought the listeners down to the modern date, the birth of Ak-Sar-Ben as a booster organization and its twenty-two years of progress.

Again this feeble patriarch's mind suffered a lapse, and he seemed to hear again the bells of the royal court of the fabled King Tartarax, the mythical king toward which the Indian-guides in centuries gone by, led Coronado and his band of Spanish cavaliers.

Even as the old seer vanishes from the foreground the bells of the fabled court chimed, the curtain was withdrawn, and there was this fabled court itself lying before the gaze.

In rushed Jack Alvord, taking the part of the fabled King Tartarax. Charley Gardner played the part early in the season, and his big musical voice was much applauded. Then he had to drop out for a time, and Chief Henry Dunn took the part as well as he could for a time, but since he had the operation a year ago, he has not been especially enthusiastic for these laborious stage stunts. Jack Alvord was then decided upon, and Jack made good. Not so huge in stature as Dunn or Gardner, his voice nevertheless carried well, and he made a very creditable king of the fabled tribe of red men.

So in rushed King Tartarax roaring about the jangling of the "infernal bells," for he was growing tired of them. Likewise he was tired of gold fish, for he had fed on them until he longed for something more substantial, say a nice fat fried spring dog.

So he sang:

"Oh, please my money,
Won't someone take my dough, etc., etc.

"For I eat gold fish
On a silver dish,
Whea I'd rather have sour rum."

Ever the squaws and braves joined him in the chorus, and such a clever bevy of squaws they were in buckskin dresses with delicate fringe. F. H. Hanson was the fattest squaw in the lot. Before Hanson joined this particular aggregation, it was necessary to use padding to make up this round figure, but when Hanson was discovered, all the pillows and cushions were superfluous. R. C. Wilson and E. L. Livingston had a particularly clever step in the dance that went with this chorus. M. H. Vance, Will Fox, H. V. Smith and Harry Benford were not averse to introducing some of the modern tango and hesitation into the Indian squaw dance of five centuries ago. J. S.

Meyer, A. E. McLarnan, P. Romenek and Clint Miller could be depended upon to keep the squaw dance in perfect unison.

Jack Alvord and M. C. Brown now come storming in over the bank of the river in the costume of Lewis and Clark. They are on their way to the northwest coast, exploring the vast reaches of the Louisiana purchase. They are thirsty and are shown to Tartarax's bar.

Another shout goes up and Peter Sarpy is sighted in the distance, slowly approaching in his prairie schooner drawn by a decrepit mule. Harry Johnston played the part well, and looked every inch the hardy old trader who braved the wilds in the early days to trade with the Indians and early travelers and pioneers. The historical crank again consulted his book to see if Peter might be admitted to the gathering.

"Probably some old bootlegger," exclaimed King Tartarax, "but let him in."

So Peter Sarpy drove his mule behind the scenes, leaped off the wagon, snatched out an American flag, hauled down Coronado's Spanish colors, and hoisted the Stars and Stripes amid the applause of Indians, Chinese servants, and the multitude of candidates and visitors.

Alex Reed and Harry Goetz were the two efficient white wings of Quivera, and always created a laugh, especially when they became disoriented, dumped their cart in the middle of the street, and turned out a real live candidate.

Coronado, Peter Sarpy, Logan Fontenelle, Tartarax, and Lewis and Clark having all congregated together at the court of Tartarax, a feast was spread and some of the visitors at the Den were invited to eat. A monstrous bird flew to the table, snatched up the

table cloth, dishes and all, and soared away, before their astonished eyes. Other candidates were forced to wash themselves before eating and were terated to a mysterious ducking before they even got their fingers wet. I. A. Stalmaster, as Boot Leggo, the waiter, made a very efficient servant about the tables, and Kenneth Hatch, as Lumbago, another waiter, was equally nimble. T. B. Dysart, as The Turk, Coronado's advance agent, ably personified this notable character in Coronado's expedition.

Cleopatra had no better, abler, and sturdier boatmen to row her perfumed barge down the mystic Nile than Ed Shavlik, F. A. Waldman, I. Finkenstein, M. L. Hamann, K. H. Jones, and T. H. McNamara, who were the boatmen rowing and piloting the famous barge of Cremo down the Muddy Missouri to the court of Tartarax.

When the winners of the visitors' tour failures for various reasons, a chuck wagon was sighted in the distance, drawn by a magnificent team of oxen. The wagon was loaded with visitors, often as many as thirty sturdy sons of Nebraska were piled into the wagon.

The Indians under Chief Afraid of Firewater, who in real life is John Hogan, made a rush at the wagon, and surrounded it. Eight sturdy braves danced about the wagon. They were Louie Storz, Carl L. Abbott, M. J. Gibson, E. A. Arriens, Dr. L. A. Dermody, J. E. Archibald, W. H. Metcalfe and Bert Tanner.

The driver of the chuck wagon, Bert Fox, was overpowered. The driver of the ox team, E. L. Potter, was hog-tied, and the candidates were pulled roughly from the wagon. They were seated on the driveway and treated to a most hair-raising shock, while the Indians wailed weird songs

into their ears, and clicked their tomahawks threateningly near.

They singled out one unfortunate traveler, hustled him to the stump of a great tree, and there bound him helplessly to the tree. They flung tomahawks at him, dozens of them, which stuck amazingly close to his face and body with a horrifying thud, and clung there quivering with the shock of arrested flight.

Yes, and they shot arrows at him and into him from a distance of ten paces, and that was desperately close. Then they set fire to a pile of brush directly in front of him in order to put him to the slow torture. But—here the cowboys came clattering up the trail on fiery bronchos. They emptied their sixshooters into the

pack of Indians and sent them scampering into the underbrush. They galloped to the side of the roasting individual, cut the thongs, stamped out the fire, made camp for the evening, and then resolved themselves into a quartet, while one of their number, Lee Kennard, twirled the rope in all the devious and graceful writhings that would make Irwin Brothers' best ropers look up and notice.

Charles Taylor, Dr. Gladstone Derby, Harry Watts and John J. Hoffman constituted the cowboy quartet; and the rescue party. While the twilight was glowing in the western hills of a beautiful scene arranged at the den, these fellows always made a ten-strike with their clever little song.

"Only a cowboy, only a cowboy, laid in a cold, cold grave."
Just prior to this Indian escapade the "Zeppelin" plunged into the den, carrying always one of the visitors in a most unthinkable flight. The "Zeppelin" was manned by Victor Roos, Otto Ramer and James Fisher. It was none other than a stout motorcycle with a third wheel and a basket seat. The candidate was put

in the basket, and Victor Roos, the expert driver, whirled him about the stage, keeping the third wheel off the floor half the time, and the basket with its frightened occupant sailing high in the air over the edge of the platform and above the heads of the audience.

A military drill and a beautiful tableau wound up the evening's performance.

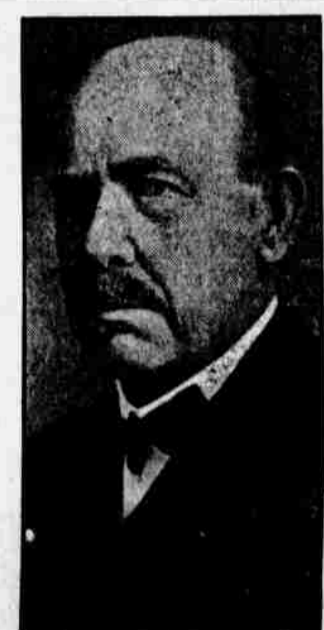
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