



# TABOR LUCK

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by

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(author of "Silver Queen")

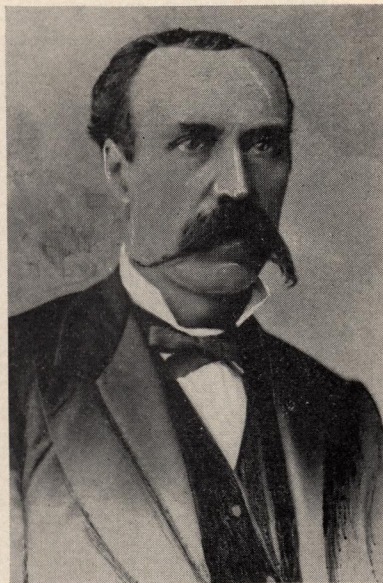
You have sat in the fabled Tabor Grand Theatre and felt the aura of a glamorous past that haunts its every corner. Perhaps you have been lucky enough to glimpse its beautiful, ornate curtain, still preserved since the historic night of September 5, 1881, when it first rose and fell in all its pristine glory. You may even have acquired a small specimen of ore from the dump of the Matchless Mine in Leadville, picked up, just before the autumn leaves fell, by Ralph Batschelet, an official of Variety Club (the heart of show business), and Caroline Bancroft, Colorado historian and authority on the Tabor legend. If so, your future should shine like silver.

That's what the tommy-knockers say.

Perhaps you don't know about tommy-knockers. According to the early Cornish miners (who were always called Cousin Jacks, as a joke, by other miners), the mines are inhabited by merry, little men about two feet high who help humans with their work. The tommy-knockers warn workers when there is going to be a cave-in and their tappings on the rock walls often lead miners to a rich pocket of ore. These helpful little gnomes know the future.

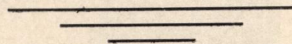
The Cousin Jacks had many other superstitions about the various mines around Leadville and they came to believe that there was something very special about the Matchless Mine and Tabor luck. Horace Tabor admired the Cousin Jacks, those joking,





## THE TABOR TRIANGLE

*When Tabor was forty-seven years old, he struck it rich. He wanted to have a good time, give parties, gain public office, and live in the grand manner. To all of this, his spare, New England wife, Augusta, turned up her austere nose with its pince-nez. Two years later, Tabor found Baby Doe with her tip-tilted nose and gay Irish smile, and a triangle was expertly drawn.*





hard-working men who were such adept miners that even the gophers couldn't out-tunnel them. He, too, decided that, no matter what reverses, the Matchless Mine was a limitless bonanza and that the turn of fortune would always again bring up Tabor Luck.

If you went down the #6 shaft of the Matchless, crouching low in the ore bucket, you could always hear the tommy-knockers working. The Cousin Jacks must be right. The little gnomes were certainly lending their special protection to the mine and were reiterating their prophecy of undying silver riches in the Matchless. For over ten years, during the 'eighties of the last century, Tabor's belief was vindicated. Each month, the Matchless poured forth over eighty thousand dollars—nearly a million dollars a year!

Before this fantastic luck, Tabor had been a poor stonemason and farmer until he decided to come West in the Pikes Peak Gold Rush of 1859. He joined hordes of other men who pushed across the plains to find a glittering future in Colorado. Some of them did find a golden chance. But not Tabor. For nearly twenty years he struggled to find a rich claim in first one mining camp after another. Finally he gave up and settled down to a modest, hard-working life as a store-keeper in Oro City, three miles from what was to be the future town of Leadville.

When silver was found on the hills east of the site of Leadville, he moved his store to be closer to the excitement and, one May morning in 1878, grubstaked two prospectors to about seventeen dollars worth of supplies in return for one third interest in anything they found. The prospectors went searching on Fryer Hill and what they found was the Little Pittsburgh. The claim they staked, originally worth seventeen dollars, was incorporated into a company that following autumn worth twenty million dollars.

Tabor was vaulted into wealth and prominence. He was elected lieutenant governor and became the most talked-of figure in Colorado. He and his severe New England wife, Augusta, moved to Denver and entered into Denver society. At least Tabor tried to. Augusta thought all the show and fuss was silly. She actually preferred hard work and she couldn't change her pattern of life. She became more and more critical and carping.

Tabor turned to other women in order to have his ruffled feelings soothed. One of these was Lizzie McCourt Doe, an exquisite little Dresden doll from Oshkosh. In 1877, she had come as a bride



### THE TABOR THEATER ON OPENING DAY

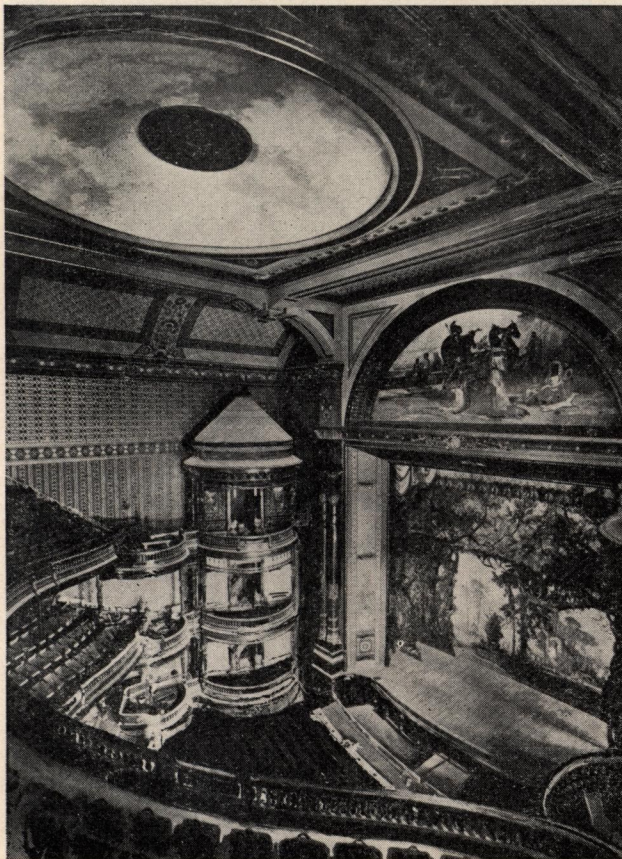
*In September, 1881, Denver had grown to a city of over a hundred thousand population; but it still had unpaved streets and its transportation was limited to horse-drawn vehicles. When the curtain rose on the night of September 5, a great theatrical history was ushered in. Some of the stars who were to appear on the Tabor's stage were Sarah Bernhardt, Lotta Crabtree, Helen Modjeska, Lilian Russell (who spelled Lilian with only one 'l' but had great trouble getting others to do so), Joseph Jefferson, Edwin Booth, Harry Lauder, Lawrence Barrett, and Lily Langtry.*

to Central City where her husband had been working the Fourth of July Mine, owned by his father, W. H. Doe, Sr. But her husband, W. H. Doe, Jr. was no miner and hated the rugged camp life. He deserted "Baby" (as she was nicknamed) and the Does were divorced.



She moved to Leadville and there, aged twenty-five, she met Tabor on one of his frequent mining trips back to the camp. It was love at first sight on her part and she became his sweetheart. The forty-nine-year old millionaire set her up in the Clarendon Hotel in Leadville and later moved her to the Windsor in Denver (of which he was part owner). As the affair became more and more apparent, the tongues began to wag.

Meanwhile, Tabor was building the Tabor Grand Theatre. Its splendor was to be even more effulgent than the Windsor Hotel which he and his manager, W. H. Bush, had completed furnishing

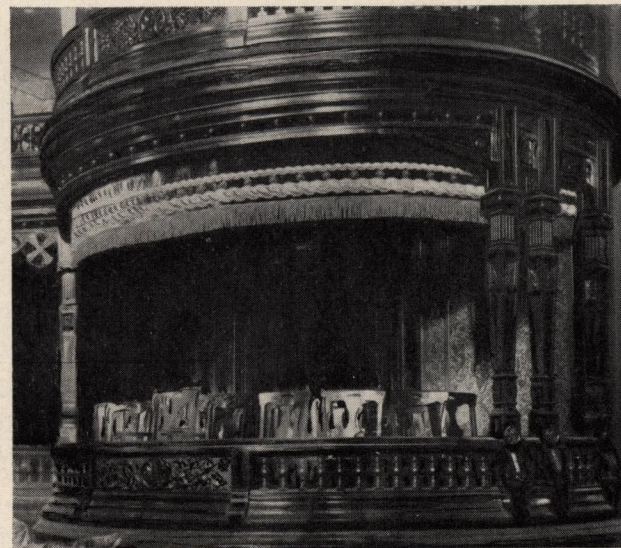


### GRANDEUR

*The elegance of the wood used in the Tabor's interior was exclaimed in copious columns of newsprint. This photo was taken just before the theatre was completed. The shimmering, expensive crystal chandelier has not yet been hung; nor the chairs yet placed in the ornate boxes that were to display many elaborate gowns for the edification of the society reporters on opening night. Modern-day audiences do not like boxes, designed more for being seen than seeing; but, without doubt, these displayed the ultimate in nineteenth century theatrical style*

### BOX A

*History was made in the sight of Tabor audiences in this box. It was empty on opening night because Augusta was jealous and mad. Later, after Baby Doe married Tabor, it was always decorated with lilies, and contained an ice bucket of champagne, when she was to be present. The box also had a large silver plaque hung for all to see, bearing the proud legend — TABOR.*



in June, 1880. To make the Tabor Grand resplendent, everything was to be imported. Carpets were ordered from Brussels; brocades and tapestries, from France; the best cherry wood, from Japan, for use in the interior; and mahogany, from Honduras, to make balustrades and other trimmings. Contracts were let in Chicago and New York, and a Detroit artist, Robert Hopkin, was commissioned to paint the curtain. The finished building was to be the most expensive west of the Mississippi.

On the opening night, Emma Abbott sang "Lucia" to the most gala audience ever assembled in the pioneer town of Denver. In tribute to his many benefactions to Colorado and, in particular, of this splendid building, Tabor was presented with an elaborate gold watch fob. It was a night of triumph.

But it was also a night of scandal. The Tabor box, Box A, just left of the stage as viewed from the audience, was empty. Augusta Tabor had stayed home. But hidden under a black veil to the rear of the theatre was the alluring blonde Baby Doe. Venomous gossip spread the story.





A GALA MATINEE IN THE GAY 'NINETIES



*The Matchless Mine supplied the finest, minted silver to make this charming frame that always stood on Tabor's dressing table. When hard times and near-destitution beset him, he borrowed money on the treasure to buy groceries for his wife and two little girls. At the last, death took him before he could redeem his cherished frame. The photo is the first he ever possessed of Baby Doe. It was taken in Leadville in 1880 and shows the masses of reddish gold hair for which she was justly famous as a young woman. Tabor always loved her long tresses as well as this quaint picture, depicting "Baby" as she looked when they first met. On that night, in the Saddle Rock Cafe, they fell in love.*



**PURE SILVER**

Trouble and quarreling followed. Finally, after two divorce suits and a secret marriage, Tabor and Baby Doe were married, again, at a lavish ceremony in the Willard Hotel in Washington where he had been sent to fill out a month's unexpired term as senator. Baby Doe appeared in a \$7,000 outfit (now on display at the State Museum) before President Arthur and others of the politically great. But their wives were notable for their absence, that March 1, 1883.

During the next decade the Tabors lived on a scale of opulence difficult to imagine in this day of high income taxes. But the Silver Panic of 1893 brought their star to a swift descent. Unwise investments, added to the Tabors' inability to comprehend the government order demonetizing silver, brought them to the verge of destitution. The gossips had said Baby Doe would desert Tabor if he lost his money. But they were wrong. She remained faithful.





## MATCHLESS ORE

Senator E. O. Wolcott interceded with President McKinley to give him the postmastership of Denver and they were saved from starvation. When he came to die in 1899, his last words to Baby Doe were:

"Hang on the Matchless. It will be worth millions again."

And for twenty-five years afterward, she obeyed his injunction. Poor and forlorn, she lived in a former machine and tool cabin close to the #6 shaft, guarding the Matchless' treasures with her life. Her long vigil extended through a World War, the giddy Nineteen-twenties, into the black years of the depression, and past the making of a movie about her own life. At long last, it was ended on March 7, 1935. There, in the Matchless Cabin, she was found, frozen, her arms flung out to make her body the shape of a cross. Her spirit was gone to be reunited to her cherished Tabor in death.

*Ralph Batschelet and Caroline Bancroft journeyed to Leadville to gather specimens from the dump of the Matchless and near-by mines on Fryer Hill in order that the pieces of rock might be offered by the Tabor Theatre to their patrons in Denver. Here, the duo is shown, sitting on the dump of the Dunkin mine, just west of the Matchless. The gallus frame of the Matchless looms in the background beyond the roof of the former's shaft house. The tool cabin (that served as Baby Doe's home for most of thirty-five years) is now dilapidated. She used to enter through a lean-to doorway; but lessees, after her death, altered this to a woodshed and turned her former windows into doors.*

Some have pointed to the lines on the famous Tabor curtain:

"So fleet the works of man, back to the earth again,

Ancient and holy things fade like a dream."

They have added that those lines were a fatal prophecy of the true Tabor story . . .

But the Cousin Jacks just smile and the tommy-knockers keep on knocking in the Matchless Mine. To anyone who understands their language, it is undoubtedly being made clear about the new developments in Leadville. There is a re-birth in the town and the government has undertaken the project of a great drainage tunnel, boring under all the mines on Fryer Hill. The Matchless will soon be empty of water. Men with eager eyes are waiting to lease it again and pry into its network of drifts and tunnels. Who can tell what riches await these new miners on some yet unexplored tunnel? Perhaps the Matchless is still a bonanza and will bring more Tabor Luck!

If you believe the tommy-knockers are right, hang on to your Tabor Theatre brochure and your specimen of Matchless ore. Make a wish with them and your future will glisten with the shimmer and shine of newly-minted silver—golconda silver—for which the Matchless Mine and Tabor Luck are eternally famous.

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*The management of the Tabor Theatre heartily recommends to their patrons that, if they desire to read the full details of the Tabor legend, they buy a copy of "Silver Queen: The Fabulous Story of Baby Doe Tabor" by Caroline Bancroft. It is priced at one dollar and is available with this brochure or at any bookstore.*