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AT THE HOUSE-BOAT ON THE STYX—Shakespeare's Birthday and Other Things

Reported by Wireless to John Kendrick Bangs



He Merely Fiddled While Rome Was Burning.



Shakespeare, Wearing a Wreath of Laurel, Entered the Room.

It was Shakespeare's birthday, and the divine bard's appreciation of his own greatness had become so increasingly evident that it had got on the nerves of a large number of his fellow Hadenians.

"He's not exactly what you would call unworldly with himself today, is he," said Homer, as the great dramatist stroled by with his head thrown so proudly back that he seemed aware of nothing but himself and the ceiling.

"Nun—no," stammered Demosthenes. "Bub—bub—but you—you kink—can't bub—blab—him. This is Bub—bub—Bill's bub—bub—birthday, and of all the bub—great fuf—figures in the waw—world's bub—history he is the only waw—one th—that's im—celebrated bub—by tul—living im—mum—mortal."

"Get Demosthenes a new needle, will you Raleigh?" whispered Homer, to the chairman of the house committee.

"That's enough to give anybody's nose a tilt," said Addison.

"That's true," said Homer, "but Bill's been a bit tontical for some little time. To hear him talk you'd think he and the solar system were twin brothers. He's the only man I know of outside of Potsdam who really celebrates the universe. You don't see George Washington strutting around like a pouter-pigeon looking for a worm in the me committee on membership had frequently to accept disagreeable responsibilities.

"And I'll do it yet, too," growled Fawkes, menacingly. "If you shades don't treat me with a little more respect."

"I'll move to have you suspended, sir," roared Dr. Johnson, shaking his cane at Fawkes.

"I should worry!" laughed Fawkes. "A man who has been hanged by the neck, Doc, doesn't bother much about being suspended from a club. Go as far as you like. I'm immune."

"I refuse to discuss this Bolshevik's disqualifications for membership in this organization when the subject under consideration is Shakespeare's birthday," interjected Homer. "If we're going to discuss the disqualification of members for membership in this club, we'd better take a year off, and start at the beginning with Cain and Ananias."

"Well," said Aristophanes, "dropping our possible Fawkes. As for the time being and getting back on the main line again, I want to say that my objection to birthday celebrations is that they are so darned exclusive. Why the deuce, let me ask you, do they celebrate Shakespeare's birthday and let Aristotle's and Plato's and mine slide? And Homer's, too? Why don't they celebrate that?"

"I guess one of the reasons is that nobody knows when you were born, and in Homer's case, there's some doubt that he was ever born at all," said Benjamin Franklin.

"Tush!" retorted Aristophanes. "I don't hold any brief for Homer, but as far as I can find out he was born no times than any of us. If you don't believe it, Benly, read your history, and

you'll find that Homer was born at Smyrna at Rhodes, at Colophon, at Salamis, at Chios, at Argos, at Athens, and heaven only knows where else—Brooklyn, for all I know. It would take at least a week to celebrate his birthday at the very lowest estimate. Why the itinerary of Homer's birthplaces almost suggests the idea that his mother was out on the Chautauque circuit when her illustrious son first dawned upon the horizon of mortality."

"Sure thing," said Addison. "I've thought that very same myself. Homer's birthplace reads like a timetable on a jerk-water railroad in Western New York. How did it all happen, Homer?"

"I was a favorite son in all those places," said Homer.

"How did you come to overlook Salomki and Ypeyanti?" queried Xerxes.

"And Kokomo?" put in Poe.

"I'd have called him an Away-From-Homer if I'd been his father," said Aeschylus, with a wink at Petrarch.

"Well, I agree with Aristophanes," said Nero. "It is invidious to pick out certain people to celebrate, and ignore the others. Think of all I did for Rome, and yet who ever remembers my birthday?"

"A birthday, Nero," said Dr. Johnson. "is celebrated in commemoration of a man's virtues, and you didn't have any."

"O, I don't know about that," said Marcus Aurelius. "I think Nero showed considerable self-restraint when he merely fiddled while Rome was burning instead of going out and pouring gasoline on it, as you naturally expect a man of his character to do."

"By Jove, Marcus," cried Nero. "What a bully Nica. I wish to heaven I had thought of it."

"I guess those who heard you play would say that, too," said Stravinsky, who had always resented Nero's claims to musical virtuosity.

"But really, boys," said Homer, "when you think of all the illustrious people in history, from me down to Jack Johnson."

"Jack Johnson," prompted Samson.

"All right," said Homer. "I never heard of Jack Johnson, and I am therefore not familiar with his writings."

"He invented what they call punch in America," said Poe.

"Well," said Homer, "whatever Professor Johnson invented, or did not invent, to get back to what I was saying—when you think of all the famous men in history, from me down to Jack Johnson."

"Or from Adam to Trotsky," said Alcibiades.

"Not to mention such illustrious women as Helen of Troy, and Salome, and Cleopatra, and Queen Elizabeth, and Joan of Arc, and George Eliot, and—"

"Lydia Pinkham," said Mollere.

"Precisely," said Homer, "and Lydia Pinkham."

"The mother of pacifism," suggested Napoleon.

"Better leave the women out, Homer," said Ben Brummel. "They wouldn't like it. You can't tie a woman down to a specific birthday that would give you a clue to her actual age."

"Be that as it may, but for Apollon's sake let me finish!" roared Homer. "What I have been trying to unload for the past three weeks is this: We all these illustrious persons of both sexes undoubtedly born at some time or another, why pick out Shakespeare for a fortissimo blast and put the soft pedal on the rest of us?"

"I think I can solve that problem," said Washington. "It would hardly be expedient to celebrate everybody's birthday. If you made a national holiday of everybody's birthday, as has been done in my case, the world's work wouldn't go on. We'd all be taking a day off all the time. There are only 365 days in a year, Homer, but there have been more than 365 famous persons born into the world. We've got a thousand of 'em on the membership list of this club right now, with a waiting list that stretches from Dan to Beer-shah."

"Well, even at that," said Dr. Johnson, "it wouldn't be a bad idea. Con-

sidering that the world's work has lately become a universal holiday in which all the activities of the time were suspended for say 18 or 15 centuries, wouldn't it be a good idea, if you could get the earth calmed down into a state of quiescent reflection for as little as a hundred years, what a boon it would be! Time would take care of Bill Sykes of Potsdam, and his crowd, and once the peoples of earth had a chance to think, and think straight, we'd see the end of all they stand for."

"It wouldn't do, Doc, it wouldn't do at all," put in Wellington. "Time may be the cure for Bill of Potsdam, but what Bill needs is not cure but treatment. The only fear I have about Bill is that he won't live to see the outcome of this little picnic of his. It is not Time's job, but the stunt of Nemesis to take care of little Willie."

"Well," said Wellington, "Bill's got to be kicked."

"But suppose you could get him to promise to lay off for 100 years," persisted Johnson.

"Promise!" roared Archimedes.

"Promise!" roared Dr. Johnson. "You are not a scientist, you know, and therefore you don't know how to analyze what is known as a Kaiser's promise. You have known all about other words, but it is quite evident that you are not yet on to William's words. His promises are made in Germany, and are therefore of quiescent reflection. They appear to be one thing, when as a matter of fact they are directly the reverse. When William crosses his heart and says I will, you know that he is doubling your years and means that he won't. When he says I won't, if you have any intelligence, you lay bets that he will. His promises are as reliable as the party platform of a Bolshevik convention, and at the end of the first year of your period of quiescent reflection, backed by the Kaiser's promise, you'd find yourself in the position of a quiescently reflective Spring lamb that has been benevolently assimilated by a quiescently reflective, but ravenously hungry, pack of wolves. Did you ever analyze one of the Kaiser's so-called words, doctor?"

"No," said Dr. Johnson. "I can't say that I ever did."

"Well, try it some time," said Archimedes. "You'll find it one-fifth hypocrisy, one-fifth mendacity, two-fifths egotism, and the rest pure gloss. Bill is the verily prefigurator of all time. He gives you a word and in a jiffy it turns to a prevarication on your hands. He puts a promise in a hat, pronounces an incantation, taps the hat three times, and lo, out comes a slippery fish of repudiation, and all the time he is doing it he is humming 'Nearer My God to Thee' under his breath. Take my word for it, Sam, while there's a Hobenzollern left out of jail what you call a universal agreement is one part camouflage, and 99 parts taradiddle."

It was at this point that Shakespeare, wearing a wreath of laurel on his brow, entered the room. He looked haughtily about him, apparently oblivious to the existence of everybody else.

"He and the universe," said Caesar.

"Did you ever see such side?" said Raleigh.

"He needs to be taken down a peg," said Virgil.

"Go up and tell him his name is familiar, but you don't recall his face. Boney," said Xerxes, nudging Napoleon with his elbow.

"Leave him to me, boys," said Homer. "I'll put a tack in his tire all right—just watch your Uncle Homer. Whereupon the illustrious Greek smiled broadly, and in a loud voice called out:

"Hello, Shake, old pote, whither away?"

"Ah, Homer," said Shakespeare, condescendingly, holding out his left hand for a flabby pressure. "That you? What have you been doing with yourself lately, writing little verses?"

"I've been laying out a billiard, with you as the hero, Bill," said Homer.

"What's the big idea, wearing that mistle-toe bough over your eyebrows,"

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PERFORMERS SWEEP NEW YORK CONCERT AUDIENCES OFF FEET BY BRILLIANT WORK

Mme. Raissa Creates Sensation After Sensation—Society Women Throw Programmes Into Air at Carnegie Hall. Heifetz and Matzenauer Continue to Enthral Hearers.

BY EMILIE FRANCES BAUER.

NEW YORK, April 20.—New York is assuredly making a record for itself and incidentally there have been some record-breaking artists, among whom may be named Rosa Raisa, Margaret Matzenauer and Jascha Heifetz. All of these faced audiences which for enthusiasm and size have not been surpassed this season.

Mme. Raissa came as a musical thunderbolt, because, although she was a

sensational success in opera, no one gave much thought to the concert possibilities of the singer, but supposed that it would be an opera singer transferring her activities to the concert stage, with just enough skill to make a concert possible.

Instead the dramatic soprano of the Chicago Opera Association proved to be an artist of the finest recital qualities, not the least of which is a voice of extraordinary beauty, brilliancy and possibilities. Following her sold-

out Hippodrome appearance of Sunday night, March 21, she sang before a select audience provided by the Rubinstein Club at Carnegie Hall Tuesday afternoon, when those present saw that said body of society women aroused to such a degree of enthusiasm that programmes were thrown into the air and many arose to their feet to do her homage. Sunday night at the Hippodrome, in her third appearance within the week, she went into the class of sensations of which there are but few

who justly deserve the place that she has won, and now the name of Raissa should be enough to fill any auditorium.

Matzenauer Thrills Audience.

Carnegie Hall was filled to its utmost capacity and many were turned away when Mme. Matzenauer, with Frank La Forge at the piano, faced an expectant and demonstrative audience. The singer had announced the receipts to go to the war savings stamps work and she appeared under a great and effective poster surmounted by two immense American flags. Many have sung the "Star-Spangled Banner," but none has ever made a deeper impression, nor has any audience ever responded more spontaneously or emotionally to the strains of this deeply moving National song.

Mme. Matzenauer's programme was admirably made and superbly sung and neither in the list nor as encore did she include anything at all which app-

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