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Roman Revels at Ak-Sar-Ben's Court



AY, stranger; friend thou mayest be, but stranger sure art thou. Knowest thou where wine may be procured? For, surely the flames of Phlegethon were naught compared to the thirst wherewith I rage; and I would also seek in the rosy cup a boon of sweet nepenthe, though I doubt that Lethe's flood could blot from memory that which I have this night been witness to." It so happened that the wayfarer thus addressed was looking himself for a place open after hours, and when he found himself hailed by an individual of noble mien. bareheaded, wrapped in a flowing robe of white, like a winding sheet, and shod with

sandals, standing at a downtown street in-

ersection, he pulled himself together to make sure he was awake and didn't have them, and then answered: "Sure; if you'll go with me, I'll put you next to stuff that will not only wipe away your thirst, but will make you rob your own coat if you drink

enough."

After a waiter had removed the first bottle, pulled the cork of the second and had again filled the glasses, the first speaker

resumed: "By Bacchus! I should know that drink. Methinks it is the foaming mead wherewith the barbarous Gauls do steep their senses into slumber. I drank it first when, following Caesar's glorious eagles, I passed the Rhone and journeyed to the Rhine. Perpol! That were a march whereof those who returned have not yet tired of prating. Yet nothing did we do or see like that which I have seen since last I wakened. I know not what my friends will say; when I see Rome again and there give word of that which has befallen me, I will be marked as one kissed of the gods. And truly have I been, or else most sorely

tricked. For last night I did lay me down after a reveleat the house of noble Declus Quintus; tonight I am told that Rome is distant a yriad of leagues. Antonius, centurion and a friend of Caesar, am here held stranger and scoffed at. By Bacchus! should ever I again approach the seat of Caesar, it will be to give him tidings of this ill-mannered pec-

tion of this filthy drink."

Offered to Jove. tile who bow not at the name of Rome,

"'Say, Doc who's your friend?' said one eving me askance.

And he proceeded to empty on the floor the liquid on which Milwaukee's fame is founded, and to show that he had not lost his presence of mind, he filled himself another and clamored for the third bottle. way was rough, and the rushing car did The wayfarer, whose interest in a place sway and bound so that I was lost to all that would be open for hours

had been somewhat satiated by the first bottle, was inclined to end the interview, believing himself to be in company with some bibulous person who had escaped from a Turkish bath before he was thoroughly cured of his early evening potations; yet there

was something in mein and tone that held him there, and when the waiter had come and gone again, the noble Antonius re sumed his discourse concerning

himself and what he had witnessed. Nearly as could be gathered from his tale he landed in Omaha just before the electric lights were turned on in the evening, and it was probably just as well that he had; for had he appeared on the streets in daylight, he would have been placed

under restraint. As it was, he was merely taken for someone connected with the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben, and had been sent forward to the Den by way of the Dodge street trolley. What he saw there really made up the interesting part of his tale, although his comments on the welcome he received from a crowd of newsboys he encountered before he was put aboard the ear, and some of the advice they gave him were as amusing as they were serious. By the time the third bottle had gotten well on its way in pursuit of the first and second, the noble Antonius had succeeded in establishing himself as a prominent citizen of Rome of about

49 B. C., an officer in the army of the republic, and a close friend of Julius Caesar and other notables of the time. "Faint I was and famished, and seeking for that wherewith to stay myself, when I was set upon by a rabble, who reviled me with many

shouts and Jeers, 'Get onto him.' cried the one, and 'W'en djer get away?" demanded another, and naught I could say would appease them, nor gain me any civility. 'Come out of it,' they shouted and "To de den widjou." To the den! Me, loomed up not far off. For well I

Who paid dis freak's fare? Dat's all right. I'll put him off at de den, sure; de Coll-

"Now were we speeding like the wind, nor could I tell whither; but of a verity the save one desire, that the journey might be speed-

ly over, when the strange-looking captain of the car did say again: Here y'are! All out for the den! Dat's all right, cull. Follow de push, and he shoved me away with those who prevented me from escaping by crowding every avenue of the wonderful vehicle wherein we were so jerked, and behold now they all

oward the glowing portal of a great structure of whose dimensions I could gain no notion, so faintly were they outlined in the night. Well I knew it could not be our noble Coliseum, for I did miss the familiar figures of its majestic walls. Little time had I for thought, for soon was I jostled through a narrow doorway that gave in-

gress to a mighty hall. "My joy can scarce be told, for here I found myself again in Rome; the glorious eagles of our senate, the fasces of the lichimself, seated upon the tribune. My wan-

derings at end. But, strange was the sight on looking around; for seated where the Roman citizens should have been were none but barbarians, and were it not for my countrymen upon the arena's floor, I might have fancied Rome had

began a herald, and I listened while he told of the return of the army from its latest conquest, and learned that many of those I saw about me were barbarians, fated to make a Roman holiday, while many whom I had him who had been bound upon the thought were burbarians were in truth Romans, like myself. Now, among the guard there did rise some talk, concerning me, principally between two centurions, both mighty men and strong.

"'Damfino,' respended him who had been a rudeness strange to Roman hailed as Doc; 'some guy Foxy Grandpa usage, toss it Into a receptacle, has run to fill out. I reckon."

"And now a mighty acclaim arose, for to the den? Methinks my finish Caesar had arren from the tribune to address the multitude, and when the lictors clangor. And they at once deknow the meaning of to the den with had commanded silence, and the heralds manded another victom, and from him!" But why I should be haled to had advised the citizens that it was the the barbarians asked a vote, by the den I knew not, nor did I have will of the mighty and imperious Caesar the usual sign. Every unregenerate thumb long time to pender thereon, for of that the pestilent malcontents, who were was downward turned, and with horrible and laugh and make a sport of a sudden there came a sound of grind- confined within the strong dungeon should glee did the burly centurions hasten forour great mother's name. They sha'll ing of wheels, and a rearing, and he dealt with after the manner of Rome, ward with another of the condemned to be made to feel her power, and in a strange appearing car stopped beside again did the shouting fill the whole edi- bind him upon the smoking altar, when a the dust and with bitterness shall they me. 'Laboard'' cried out the officer who fice, and across the arena dashed the sol- noble Roman youth did crave a boon. repent the jest wherewith they strive to seemed in charge; though most strange he diers, while the trambling wretches were set at naught her majesty. Unto the gods looked and stranger did be talk. 'Move up led forth from their cells. Nowhere could Caesar, all graciousness, did hear him. He I vow it, and to my return I pour a liba- in front; step lively now. Dere's room in I decry the dens wherein were safely held did set out how the barbarians, glutting front. Fare, please. Coliseum? Sure. Dat's the animals to whom these malefactors their bloodthirstiness, did condemn to death

where dev all go. Look out dere! should be fed; but I doubted not that all all those before them, exercising the right were ready.

"Say, wot's your politics?" demanded him barian as he spoke. Now, when did ever Mother Rome concern herself with the polities of one she destined to grace her games for the edification of her citizens? Most singular it appeared to me nor did I hear the mumbled reply of him to whom the query was addressed, but the shout of those who held him answered me well. He had failed. " 'Away widdim'

"Swift was he hurried off, and near where a sacrificial fire burned, and in which irons to sear the flesh of beasts were kept in constant heat. Another and another failed of the test, and all were condemned to die that Rome might be merry. I felt my blood leap light within my veins, for very joy, and looked about for one to lay a wager with, when lo! across the floor there rolled an altar on which burnt offerings were laid, and on it quickly did the soldiers bind a

" 'Ain't he fat, Doc?' laughed the centurion whom I had first noted, and who I learned in private is a dealer in faggots at the city's gates. To him the odor of a burnt offering is more than savory incense for it means a further increase in his traffic. And he shook his sides with laughter as he watched the victim writhe upon the altar's

" 'Sure,' answered Doc, 'and merrily will he splutter when the flames shall lick tors, the Practorian guard, and Caesar around his limbs and sizzle with the grease that drips into the blaze."

"While I pondered on that word 'sure,' that seemed oracular among these men, so that it was used by all, the flames were kindled at the victim's feet, and the priests did slowly drop the curtains that screened the altar, that this votive offering to great Jove might be the more acceptable be-

cause not profuned by barbarian gaze, for yet were the barbarians looking on. In time the flames died down, and when again the curtains were drawn up, the calcined skeleton of altar alone remained. Unused am I to qualms of stomach, but it did lousness did these men take that which lately was a man, and with strangely inscribed, 'SANITARY DEPARTMENT, CITY OF ROME,' which came and went with great

of Roman citizenship, by voting. For this he did propose that of the thoughtless who had been hailed Doc, clutching a bar-crew, that one or some, be picked and made to feel that to which they so readily did condemn others.

"A right merry jest, methought, and when Caesar did give assent, the wisdom of his choice was made apparent, and quickly did the soldiers hale down into the arena,

others from among the witless crowd and prepare them for the torture. But deeming it expedient to save their lives did order that they be not dealt with after the manner of condemned men, but be given such small chance of life as the Fates might accord them. To guide untamed coursers in a chariot race some, and to others did the editor most graciously a'lot the task of accomplishing that most dif-

ficult of all equestrian feats of riding a steed that did not exist. And yet all did safely pass the tests, nor were those who had been spared the less edified

scause of what they had witnessed. While marveled and would not believe that Rome was still Rome; so greatly had the customs of the Eternal City altered, a spell did seem to come on all, and then

"Backward rolled the tribune, and from between its divided walls did enter the potentate of the great Eastern realm, whose guest I am fain to think myself, borne by a most majestic elephant, and attended by two most beautiful maidens-vestals, was I told. In words of solemn import did he set forth the oceasion of all the things that I had witnessed, but naught could I make

of his discourse, save that Rome was no longer mistress of the world. And while I wondered at this, b ceased speaking, and from those who bowed in homage before him did he call forth some to state the cause of themselves and the who had been condemned with them Nor did these go without that fear and trepidation that should rightly mark one but lately released from imminence o

What the Elephant Did. death.

"One, who sits w near the throne that he may ye be second in all the land, did ap proach with such trembling that he was marked of all, and did admit his fear lest some secret trap should overwhelm him ere he had attained the station to which he "'A boon, oh, Caesar!' he did cry, and was called. And right soon again was there a great commotion and a hurrying of

(Continued on Page Eight.)

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