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Ten Minute Classics

Famous Tales and Legends Told in Brief Form

The Masterpiece of Shakespeare's Great Indian Predecessor

By J. W. MULLER

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Many centuries before there was a Shakespeare, whose tercentenary was recently celebrated, there lived in India a dramatist and poet, Kalidasa, whom men have come to call the Indian Shakespeare. The comparison is less fanciful than many such comparisons usually are. Kalidasa's greatest drama, "Shakuntala," more accurately rendered as "Cakuntala," is graceful with the poetry that makes Shakespeare's enchanting to read. The handling of the themes of love and sorrow are much alike in the works of both men, and the Indian dramatist introduces comic characters who speak in Sanskrit strikingly like the homely wit of Shakespeare's clowns.

In a holy hermitage under the Himalayas, on the banks of the sacred river Malini dwelt Shakuntala, brought up from infancy by the blessed, high-souled sage, Kanva. Here where bent and bird were unafraid because there was no hate, she grew up amid purity with other hermit girls, flower-children of the sacred grove, who addressed the blossoms and vines as their sisters.

One day when Kanva was absent the strong-armed, mighty King Dushyanta lost his way while hunting and entered the sacred precincts. Shakuntala saw the noble man, and, knowing not what love was, could only cry out to her companions that something hurt her heart cruelly. She lay down, pining, on her couch of flowers, and there the king found her, garlanded in lotus chains white as moonbeams shining in the night.

"Oh, my bewitching girl, have no fear of me!" he cried. He, who lived each day in high communion with the gods, approached her trembling with reverence and adoration. He drew her face tenderly to his and spoke to her truly of the sacred impulse that draws pure hearts together on earth.

Before Kanva returned, Shakuntala and the king were married amid the rejoicings of the simple hermit people. Obligated by an urgent summons to hurry to his capital, he left her; but he gave her his royal ring, engraved with his name. And he said: "Count every day one letter of the name, dear, before you reach the end, my messengers shall guide you to my halls."

That day after he had gone, while Shakuntala lay among her flowers dreaming of him with waking eyes, the sage Durvasas, known as the Irascible, knocked at the gate. As Shakuntala, lost in thoughts of love, did not hear him and hurry to him with water to wash his feet, he strode away, saying: "Because your heart by loving fancies blinded, has scorned a guest in pious life grown old, your lover shall forget you though reminded, or think of you but as a story told!"

When Kanva returned, he sent his pupils forth into the grove for ornaments to deck her. The kind trees gave silken garments and gems and lac-dye for her little feet that she might go attired as a princess. "Go to your husband!" said Kanva, and turned away sadly. The fawns tried to hold her with their soft muzzles. The flowers drooped their heads. The birds forsook their mates and cried sorrowfully. "I am torn from my father's breast like a vine stripped from a sandal tree on the Malabar hills!" sighed Shakuntala; but her heart drew her on to seek her king.

When she appeared before Dushyanta, he looked upon her and did not know her. Troubled memories stirred him as in a dream; but the curse of Durvasas lay upon him, blinding his eyes and sense. "He loved me so! He is so changed!" wept Shakuntala. She remembered the ring, but when she would have shown it to him, it was not on her finger where he had placed it. Then she recalled that during her journey when she bent down to worship at the holy Ganges, something had fallen into the water.

"Fate is too strong for me," said she. "But I will tell you something. One day in the bower you were holding a lotus-leaf cup full of water, and when a fawn approached, you coaxed him to drink, but he would not. Yet when I took the cup and held it out, he liked it and drank deep. Then you smiled and said: 'Everyone trusts his own kind. You both belong to the sacred grove.'"

"It is just such women, selfish, sweet, false, that entice fools," said the blinded king. Shakuntala covered her face and moaned: "Well, well! I had my way. I trusted a king and put myself into his hands. He had a honey face and a heart of stone. Oh, mother earth, give me a grave!"

On the moment she was snatched away by the gods and there was emptiness where she had stood before the dazzled king. Scarcely had she vanished, when the king's officers brought him his ring. It had been found in a carp of the Ganges by a fisherman. Its sight restored the king's memory and he cried aloud. He

wept and fasted. He commanded that there should be no spring festival that year, he intermitted his daily audience, and he could not bring himself to sit in judgment. He could but wander, an unquiet ghost, wasted, wretched, sunk in hopeless sorrow and shame.

When he had suffered so for many a long month, he stood one day on his cloud balcony which overhung his palace at such a height that even the royal peacocks dared not fly to it. "The royal line that flowed," he complained aloud, "a river pure and grand, dies in the childless king like streams in desert sand!"

A chariot swept from the sky. It was guided by Matall, the charioteer of Indra, heaven's king. "Enter!" said Matall.

The chariot bore Dushyanta to a mountain from whose flanks, that sank into the eastern and western seas, there dripped gold as from a cloud at sunset. It was Golden Peak, the home of the fairy Centaurs. There dwelled a man so holy that for years he had stood, postlike and desolate, in an ant hill that had grown around him, while vines tough and sere choked him as he stood sun-staring with dim eyes that knew no rest.

In this holy sanctuary the king found two hermit-women who watched a boy that played with lion cubs and dragged them from their mother as if they were kittens and she a harmless cat. "It makes me thrill to see him!" thought Dushyanta. "Why should my heart go out to this child of a stranger? Ah! What measureless content must fill the man who calls this boy his own!"

As the boy struggled with a cub, an amulet slipped from his wrist. The king stooped, and the hermit-women screamed wildly at him not to touch it. But he had it in his hand. "He has touched it!" they said, and looked at him in astonishment.

"A holy man gave it to the child," said they, wondering. "It was decreed that if anyone touch it, instantly it would turn into a serpent and sting him to death. Many times have we seen this, oh stranger! There be only three may touch it in safety—the boy, his mother, Shakuntala, or his father, Dushyanta."

They ran to call Shakuntala. Half fearing, half-hopeful, she advanced, wearing her hair in one long braid in token of being forsaken. Her worn face looked at the king's countenance that was drawn with long grief.

He fell at her feet and cried: "Black madness flies! The loving star draws to the moon!"

Matall stooped. "Was not this matter known to Indra?" asked King Dushyanta humbly.

"What is hidden from the Gods?" said Matall, smiling.

So little is known of Kalidasa that it is not even established whether he lived in the Fifth or the Sixth century of our era. But though the Hindus have been curiously indifferent to such matters as historical incidents and dates, they have always cared reverently for the works of their great writers. Therefore, Kalidasa's dramas have come down through the ages in authoritative purity, and there is no doubt as to their authorship. Of "Shakuntala" Goethe said, "Would you know in one word the bloom of the early year, the fruit of the late one, would you know all that tempts and charms, all that nourishes and satisfies, I name 'Shakuntala' and all is said."

ADJUSTED IN WRONG PLACE

How Misunderstanding of Use of Life Preservers Brought Death to Shipwrecked Persons.

A most vivid illustration of the power of mere words over human beings was once brought to the attention of the French people by Francisque Sarcey.

After the wreck of a French liner many passengers were found floating drowned with life-preservers on. These life-preservers were fastened upon the bodies, but round the middle instead of under the arms, and the greater weight of the upper part of the body had tipped the head under water, and the person, of course, was inevitably drowned.

Now it appears that the greater number of persons so drowned were French. The French term for life-preserver is ceinture de sauvetage, or "life-saving belt." This word ceinture suggests to the mind, in its moments of disorder and unreadiness such as a great catastrophe brings, the idea of putting on a belt, and, as a belt is put around the waist and nowhere else, the frightened person instinctively adjusts the life-preserver about the hips.

The result is that as soon as the person so provided falls into the water his body tips over, with the heavier part downward, and the head is plunged beneath the surface.

From Basket and Cart.

Making her way up and down the long Bienville wharf is an old woman, bending under the weight of a heavy basket. "I suppose she's been selling along the river 25 years, or maybe more," says a bystander. Truly she is very old. Her face is lined, and her nose and chin show a tendency to

Eating in New Orleans

ONE of the most interesting things in New Orleans is the delightful restaurants, some of them so quaint, and wholly unlike anything in any other city.

To the wanderer along the byways it will appear in the course of a few wanderings that a very large portion of the city's population eats in most unconventional places and unexpected attitudes. It takes its meals sitting on cotton bales, or sacks of coffee, or on a friendly step; or it goes about its work with a sandwich in one hand, munching contentedly.

The noise and confusion of the streets confuse it not at all; it pays no heed to the dust that sifts down upon its food, and it brings to the consumption of its noonday lunch, especially, a happy-go-lucky indifference that should enable good digestion to wait on appetite, and health on both.

The methods in which these unconventional meals may be supplied to the busy laborer or to the man-out-of-work and with a very few coins to rattle in his pocket are as numerous as are the viands served, says the New Orleans Magazine. There is no fancy cookery connected with them, but they furnish forth the means of staving off hunger in a more or less satisfactory fashion, and there is no complaint.

All along South Rampart street, from Poydras market to the Union station, is the habitat of the fried-fish vendor. In some mysterious manner the Greeks have taken possession of this particular business; and the descendants of Pericles and Themistocles—perhaps—acquire a little corner of some larger store, at the front; spread out a gas or oil stove along one side of it, stretch a kind of shelf along the front, and then

meet, and are seated into the smallest possible space, you see when she makes up the lines of merchandise, and sells "I bet everybody agrees that everybody has earned it, and her good luck." In and out through goes a little boy with a basket, loaded with things to eat. Behind him comes a negro woman with her little boy helping her carry the heavy basket; and she, too, is selling as she goes. You would not suppose that all the multitude of vendors could sell the accumulated hordes of sandwiches and pies and cakes which make up nearly all the loads, but everywhere the men are buying—the wharf employees, who cannot leave their work to go out for lunch.

You will see in one place a group of 30 or 40 of them, sitting on long timbers that are lying there, ready for shipment, all of them eating with such looks of bovine content as many a rich man might well envy as he sits down to his cut glass and silver and his stalled ox, with the other accessories.

If you drive on down the line of the river, you will come to a flock of the little street restaurants, lined up by the sidewalk. They are mounted on wheels, seeming to indicate the method in which they reached that point in the first place, and in which they might be moved in case the location were not found satisfactory.

Diners on the Curbstone.

The diners are sitting, 50 or 60 of them at least, on the curbstone across the street; as many more are prone on

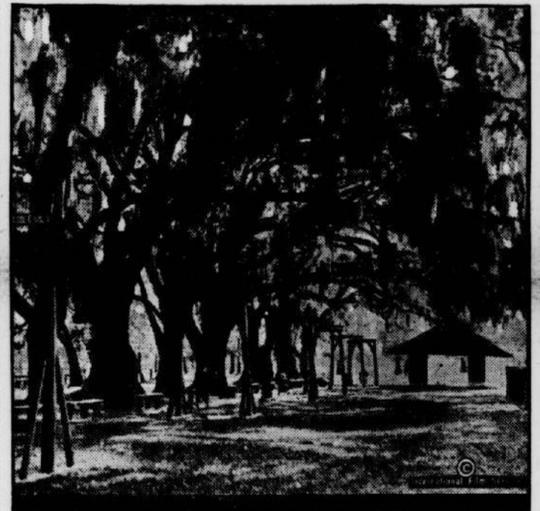
the sidewalk, a wall at their backs, their legs extended straight before them; such pictures of contentment as few cities can furnish; and if you look into the flock of restaurants you will see that the cooking and slicing and the selling are still going on. The board of health has never invaded these charmed precincts, apparently. They all look indescribably dirty, and the dust is terrific; but trade does not languish, and the smell of cooking fills the air.

Clear musical notes sound just around the corner; and here comes one of the well-known institutions of New Orleans—the hot-waffle wagon. The wagon shines with paint and cleanliness; the occupant of the wagon is resplendent in snowy apron and cap. Is it that you desire a dozen waffles? Behold, while you stand expectant he has poured the batter onto the hot griddles, has turned them, has taken them up, golden brown and sprinkled them with powdered sugar and deftly folded them in a paper, and they are yours!

If you are in the residence portion of the city of course you respect the conventions and take those waffles inside before you unwrap the bundle; but if you are downtown—well, things are different. You eat them standing, and find them very good indeed.

At certain hours of the day or night—principally toward sunset and in the earlier hours of the evening—the hot tamale man is abroad. He lugs a heavy basket and he might easily be a Mexican, judging from his complexion; and he cries: "O tamale! Tamale caliente! R-r-red hot!" all in the manner that should go with hot tamales. But is he genuine, or only a base imitation? It is greatly to be feared that he is an imitation and would not know a genuine tamale if he should see it.

To be genuine, the tamale must be made of boiled corn—not of corn meal! Perish the thought! The corn must be hulled and boiled soft, as for lye hominy; and then it must be rolled to a paste on a metate board, and with a metate roller. It must be mentioned that both board and roller are made of stone. Having been rolled sufficiently, a little wad of paste is flattened in the hands, covered with meat that has been boiled to shreds with red pepper—Oh, an enormous quantity of pepper—and then the tamale is wrapped in a corn husk, neatly folded over at the end, and steamed.



IN ADJUDON PARK

proceed to fry fish. It is all very simple. There are no tables to straighten up, no dishes to wash, no napery to send to the laundry.

Sandwich of Fried Fish.

An applicant for fried fish appears on the sidewalk and shoves 10 cents toward the artist inside; two slices of bread with a slice of fried fish between them are shoved toward him. There is no trouble about wrapping the sandwich, even. The purchaser stands outside and eats his fried fish sandwich or sits down on the curb, or walks along, masticating it at his leisure; and that is all there is to it. How much less red tape there is on South Rampart street than in the more formal restaurants further down!

It is along the wharf, from end to end, that the eating places flourish in the greatest variety. You will find in one place a little open shed which has nestled up against the side of some larger building. The chef—perhaps a man, or it may be a woman—stands back of the long table and hands out sandwiches or pies or cakes, according to the demand, and there are liquid refreshments of a kind to be had on request and the payment of a denarius.

Men are lined up in front, eating audibly, because it is said that the table manners at the little wayside eating shed are not always above reproach. And as some of them go, much refreshed, others come, for there is a big custom for the improvised restaurants along the river.

There are other restaurants which may be said to be perambulating, and which have this advantage—that they go to their customers, instead of waiting for the diners to come to them. Here is a negro with a basket of pies and cakes. He is very indignant, for he has been delayed by a crowd that were intent on eating, it is true, but were basely intent also on eating on credit. He gathers up his basket haughtily and goes his way, remarking, as he goes, "Nothin' doin'!" Perhaps he has had experience in providing meals for people who were going to pay for them next Saturday.

making her way up and down the long Bienville wharf is an old woman, bending under the weight of a heavy basket. "I suppose she's been selling along the river 25 years, or maybe more," says a bystander. Truly she is very old. Her face is lined, and her nose and chin show a tendency to

steamed.

AN UNSENT LETTER

By SUSAN E. CLAGETT.

Jim Chapman started at the front door slammed, then he muttered in exasperation: "To think I should have come to this from a little touch of fever! Nerves! I thought I had no nerves." As a matter of fact, it had been a severe attack of typhoid, with so lingering a convalescence that his physician ordered him to return to the empty old house in New England that had been his boyhood home, if he wished to regain his strength.

To the last he had protested, but without avail, and now he had been in the New England village for a week, literally confined to the house, as he had broken his ankle upon his own doorstep.

Seated in his sitting room he looked helplessly around as doors and window blinds banged.

"Where in the devil is William? That fellow is never where he's wanted. Will!"

"Will I answer?" a pleasant voice asked, and without waiting for a reply a blue-gowned figure crossed the room, hastily secured the blinds and closed the windows.

"I saw William ahead of me as I was blown through your front door. He had something in his arms that was giving him trouble. Here he is. Good gracious!"

Jim turned his head as his man came into the room carrying a kicking, squirming bundle, which he put hastily down.

"Sure, Mr. Jim, I hopes you'll never send me again for such a little tiger cat."

"It ain't no tiger cat," came with a suppressed sob from the small being on the hearth rug.

Jim looked at the child with curious resentment, but Miss Hill, who had been listening in Jim's doorway, unamused, came forward. "Of course not, dear. Jim and William were just trying to be funny." As she talked she had removed the child's wraps and now lifted her to her lap.

"Oh! I want my daddy. I want my daddy! He didn't call me 'tiger cat,'" and the child burrowed her head in the lace at Miss Hill's throat.

The two grown-ups looked at each other in silence as she sobbed herself into a heavy sleep. Then only did Kate Hill speak.

"What is it all about, Jim?"

He silently handed her a letter and he read:

"Dear Jim: When this reaches you, I will have passed into the unknown country. Because of the closeness of our friendship I am sending you the light of my heart. Her mother is dead, and she has not a relative in the world. I leave a little property that is well invested, sufficient for her needs. Am too tired now to write more. Yours, TOM."

"Poor little wail!" she said softly. "I would take her home with me, but I am going away this afternoon. I can help you, however. My housekeeper's sister has lost her child. She needs a home and will suit you. I will send her over."

"Thank you. Did you say you are going away? The thought that I should find you when this confounded note lets me get about has been the one comfort I have had throughout this lonely week. We used to have some pleasant days together, and I hoped we might return to them. I will be your neighbor for many months, and the sooner we forget the years that lie between now and then the better."

"We will talk about it when I come back," she replied evasively.

She stood beside him for an instant laughing down into his gloomy face. "Perhaps, Jim, I may not stay as long as I had intended," she said, and with these words she left the room.

To his surprise she returned within ten days; returned in a storm that broke in torrents of rain as she neared Jim Chapman's gate. As on that first day, she ran up the walk and into the house. Looking into the sitting room, she saw Jim move slowly toward the window. On the floor the child was gathering up stray leaves of what looked like a manuscript, and in her lap was a bundle of letters. Kate turned to Jim with a smile:

"It is to be hoped Mrs. Grundy has been driven to the back of her house by the storm, else my reputation may suffer. To be blown twice within a fortnight through your doorway, Jim, is certainly food for gossip."

"I want the pretty lady to read to me," a small voice interrupted. "Read this," she said persuasively, holding out a letter.

Kate picked the child up and took the letter from her. "Why, this is addressed to me," she exclaimed.

Jim gave a start and glanced toward the drawer of his library table. He turned to Kate in explanation.

"That letter was written years ago, and I have often wondered why I received no reply. Why it was not mailed I do not know, but chance has thrown it into your hands. Read it, and give me the answer to the question I then asked." He turned to the window, looking with unseeing eyes out into the storm.

She was silent so long that he at last turned to her.

Holding the child close, she looked at him with shining eyes. "I have been wishing I had received the letter when it was written, for we have lost five years of happiness."

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