

SEEING LIFE with JOHN HENRY

By George V. Hobart



John Henry Has a Musical

SAY! DID you ever stray away from home of an evening and go to one of those parlor riots?

Friend wife called it a musical, but to me it looked more like a session of the Mexican congress in a boiler factory.

They pulled it off at Mrs. Luella Frothingham's, over on the Drive.

I like Luella and I like her husband, Jack Frothingham, so it's no secret conclave of the Anvil Association when I whisper them wise that the next time they give a musical evening my address is Forest Avenue, corner of Folgate Street, in the woods.

The Frothinghams are nice people and old friends and they have more money than some folks have hay, but that doesn't give them a license to spoil one of my perfectly good evenings by sprinkling a lot of canned music and fricassee recitations all over it.

The Frothinghams have a skeleton in their closet. Its name is Uncle Heck and he weighs 237—not bad for a skeleton. Uncle Heck is a Joe Morgan. His sole ambition in life is to become politely pickled and fall asleep draped over a gold chair in the drawing room when there's high-class company present.

For that reason the Frothinghams on state occasions put the skids under Uncle Heck and run him off stage till after the final curtain.

On some occasions Uncle Heck breaks through the bars and dashes into the scene of refinement with merry quip and jest to the confusion of his relatives and the ill-concealed amusement of their guests.

This was one of those occasions.

Early in the evening Jack took Uncle Heck to his room and sat him in front of a quart of vintage and left the old geese there to slosh around in the surf until sleep claimed him for its own.

But before the wine was gone Uncle Heck put on the gloves with Morpheus, got the decision, marched down stairs and into the drawing room,

flowers we were all invited to listen to a soprano solo by Miss Imogene Glass-face.

When Imogene sings she makes faces at herself. When she needs a high note she goes after it like a hen after a ladybug. Imogene sang "Sleep, Sweetly Sleep" and then kept us awake with her voice.

Then we had Rufus Kellar Smith, the parlor prestidigitator. Rufus was a bad boy.

He cooked an omelet in a silk hat and when he handed the hat back to Hep Hardy two poached eggs fell out and cuddled up in Hep's hair.

Rufus apologized and said he'd do the trick over again if someone would lend him a hat, but nothing doing. We all preferred our eggs boiled.

Then we had Claribel Montrose in select recitations. She was all the money.

Claribel grabbed "The Wreck of the Hesperus" between her pearly teeth and shook it to death. Then she got a half-Nelson on Poe's "Raven" and put it out of business.

Next she tried an imitation of the balcony scene from "Romeo and Juliet." If Juliet talked like that dame did no wonder she took poison.

Then Claribel let down her back hair and started in to give us a mad scene—and it was. Everybody in the room got mad.

When peace was finally restored, Mrs. Frothingham informed us that the rest of the "paid" talent had disappointed her and she'd have to depend on the volunteers. Then she whispered to Miss Gladiola Hungerschitz, whereupon that young lady giggled her way over to the piano and began to knock its teeth out.

The way Gladiola went after one of Beethoven's sonatas and slapped its ears was pitiful.

Gladiola learned to injure a piano at a conservatory of music. She can take a Hungarian rhapsody and turn it into a goulash in about 32 bars.

At the finish of the sonata we all applauded Gladiola just as loudly as

that it will never be able to enter a fifty-cent table d'hôte restaurant again.

Almost before the audience had time to recover Peaches' sister, Jennie, was coaxed to sing Tosti's "Good-bye!"

I'm very fond of sister Jennie, but I'm afraid if Mr. Tosti ever heard her sing his "Good-bye" he would say, "The same to you, and here's your hat."

Before Jennie married and moved West I remember she had a very pretty mezzo-concertina voice, but she's been so long away helping Stub Wilson to make Milwaukee famous that nowadays her top notes sound like a cuckoo clock after it's been up all night.

I suppose it's wrong for me to pull this about our own flesh and blood, but when a married woman with six fine children, one of them at Yale, walks sideways up to piano and begins to squeak, "Good-bye, summer! Good-bye, summer!" just as if she were calling the dachshund in to dinner, I think it's time she declined the nomination.

Then Bud Hawley, after figuring it all out that there was no chance of his getting arrested, sat down on the piano stool and made a few sad re-

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