

HANS SACHS, MEISTERSINGER OF NUREMBERG

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This article is one portion of a larger article entitled "Schlaraffenland Steins and the Schlaraffia Society". The "chapters" in that article are:

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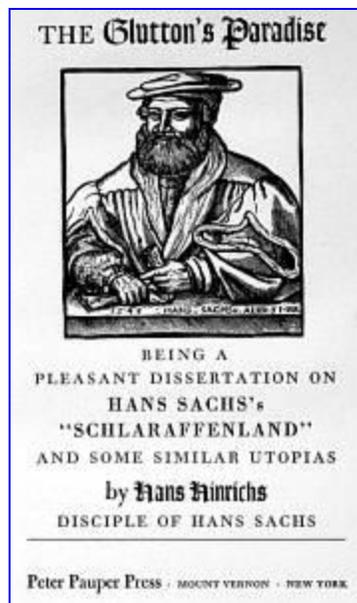
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"Schlaraffenland Steins and the Schlaraffia Society"

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Hans Sachs, 1494-1576, German poet, leading *Meistersinger* of the Nuremberg school. A shoemaker and guild master, he wrote more than 4,000 master songs in addition to some 2,000 fables, tales in verse (*Schwänke*), morality plays, and farces. His Shrovetide plays, humorous and dramatically effective, present an informative picture of life in 16th-century Nuremberg.

The Meistersingers had their origin in the early part of the fourteenth century, and their golden age was about the time of the Lutheran Reformation. A versifying mania had taken possession of the lower classes. As one historian phrases it, blacksmiths, weavers, shoemakers, doctors, and schoolmasters sought to mend their fortunes by making verses. Companies of these persons formed themselves into guilds or corporations, calling themselves "Mastersingers," and holding periodical gatherings at which they criticized each other's productions. They composed their verses in conformity with certain strict guild rules; accuracy, industry, and painstaking care, rather than an unfettered expression of the true spirit of poetry, were the main features of the Mastersingers' art. "Every fault was marked, and he who had the fewest faults was awarded the prize and permitted to take apprentices." When his apprenticeship was over the young man was admitted to the corporation as a full-fledged Meistersinger.



Expert writers who have studied the subject have shown that there was a guild of Meistersingers at Mainz as early as 1311. The idea caught the popular fancy, and before the fourteenth century was out, few towns in Germany were without their guild of Meistersingers. It was, however, at Nuremberg, and in the time of Hans Sachs (1494-

1575), that the school attained its highest development. (*music-with-ease.com*)

SCHLARAFFENLAND

(Glutton's or Fool's Paradise)
A poem by Hans Sachs (1494-1576)
Meistersinger of Nuremberg

Freely translated by Hans Hinrichs and
"purged of some vulgarities which the modern reader will prefer unprinted."

In fabulous Schlaraffenland
The Sluggards sit in full command.

It lies three leagues past Christmas Day;
And he who'd go must eat his way
(Digging a tunnel like a mole)
Through hills of porridge, to his goal.
But once he does, with breeches tight,
He'll belch at all the wealth in sight:
There peaked roofs are Pancake-shingled,
Walls and halls are solid Cake,
Porches Pork, and ceilings Steak;
Stout Sausage strings, all crisp and brown,
Are strung for fences in the town.

From every well you crank up Wine;
Malmsey and Mulberry and Rhine;
The hemlock trees are hung with Scones,
Buttered well and shaped like cones;
The pine produces Pies forsooth,
The dogwood - Doughnuts. It's God's truth!

The willows bend with Rolls and Bread
By waters that run Milk instead;
And all streams teem with toothsome Fish
Fried, baked, roasted, as you wish;
In fact they swim so close to land
You reach and catch them with your hand.
Roast Chickens, Geese and Pigeons go
Flying within reach, and slow:
And when the birds are winging South
Just gape - they'll fly into your mouth!

The Hogs you meet on every side
Are sleek and fat and crisply fried:
They carry knives - it's very nice -
And stand by while you carve your slice!
The very horses drop - poached Eggs!
And Figs pile up by donkey's legs;
For Fruit you never climb a tree:
Cherries hang down to each man's knee.

The Fount of Youth flows down past benches
Filled with oldsters mad for wenches;
For others there's the target shoot,
Where he who misses gets the loot.
The last man wins in every race,
And being first is a disgrace.
Thus if you loose while rolling dice
The winning player pays you twice;
If you owe money past one year,
The lender pays you back I hear.
A whopping Fib is worth a crown:
Great Liars gather great renown;
Whereas the man with honest wit
Provokes the populace to spit.

There is no place in all the land
For anyone who works by hand,
And he who calls for Trust and Order
Is promptly shooed across the border.
But any good-for-nothing Ass
Is honored as a man of class;
The laziest lout is crowned the King,
The Boor becomes an Atheling;
The Poltroon, all afraid to fight,
Is promptly dubbed a gallant Knight.
If you have hugely drunk and whored
You're promptly honored as a Lord;
And every kind of Rotter can
Announce himself a Nobleman.

Are you like that? Alack-a-day!
Go to Schlaraffenland and stay!
To warn my hearers this was writ;
Now go and do the opposite!
Not greedy, gross, nor lazy be,
And shun my friends, iniquity;
Be diligent, and work, and pray,
For laziness will never pay.

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