

Type: Humorous Fantasy
Class:
Code:

Author: Caryl Brahms and S. J. Simon
(Pseud.):

Title: No Nightingales

Subtiting:

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Pages:

Illus. by:

Further information:

Synopsis of Plot: Two ghosts living in house in Berkeley Square, watching pageant of the centuries until they are released by a royal visitor.

Review by: John F. Burke.

There are, complains the prospective buyer of the house, "No Nightingales" in Berkeley Square. But there are ghosts - two army officers condemned to haunt the house until a royal visitor comes, when they will be released. They attempt to interfere in human affairs in order to bring about such a visit, but it is not until the 1914-1918 war that they have any success and are allowed, gallant old warriors, slowly to fade away.

Anyone who is familiar with the hilarious work of Brahms and Simon will know what to expect. These ghosts come in contact with the notabilities of every generation. As in DON'T, MR. DISRAELI (of which there is one amusing echo in this book) the authors poke fun at everyone and everything: Doctor Johnson produces a bad witticism that is spurned by Boswell; Mrs. Siddons is plunged into difficulties; the baby Thomas Carlyle demands to be taken to Paris to see the beginning of the French Revolution; Captain Bligh is half-way home before he realises that he has forgotten to have the mutiny on the "Bounty" . . . no-one is spared.

You may regard the presence of the ghosts as no more than an excuse to provide a succession of amusing incidents loosely strung together. As a devotee of these magnificent humorists I would accept any excuse for such a feast of merriment. After a slightly ragged start the book gets under way and kept me reading avidly to the end. There is a divine lack of logic, a freedom from worries about anachronism, that must appeal to anyone with a well-developed sense of humour. Some of the scenes are as delightfully inconsequential as a good "shaggy dog" story. Even without the ghostly theme this book would be classed as fantasy, and for those who have a fondness for what is loosely called the "whacky" type of humour, is definitely indispensable. Those who know Brahms and Simon will find echoes of previous farces - the above-mentioned Disraeli episode and one reminiscence of A BULLET IN THE BUTLET. Humorists can add those books to their want list even though they are not fantasy.

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