

BT 5P 2 - 19 85

O HOMEM DE BOTAS DE CORTIÇA

The poster we reproduce, appeared on the walls of Lisbon in 1811, and the entertaining account of the incident was published a few years later in, *The Lisbon Guide*.

On the same topic we are much indebted to Snr Jorge Oliveira Marques who had kindly come up with a very plausible version of the affair.

We publish both accounts, and leave our members to draw their own conclusions. However, we must all agree that whoever planned the plot, deserves a mention in the *Guinness Book*.

The Hon. Editor.

"About the year 1809-10 an extraordinary announcement was made to the good people of Lisbon that a gentleman of inventive genius had had the good fortune to discover a method of walking on the water. The means which he was to employ for this purpose was no other than a pair of huge cork boots. This novel advertisement excited universal attention, and the interest it occasioned was wound up to its highest pitch when it was found that the inventor so far from shrinking from public scrutiny, intended to subject his invention to actual experiment in the presence of all who should take the trouble to witness it, and had

NOTICIA.

HUm Official do Exercito Britanico, tem apostado 500 Libras Esterlinas, que ha de passar á travessa do Rio Téjo, na Segunda Feira que vem, á huma hora, ou depois do meio dia, em hum par de Botas de Cortiça; e principia o seu passeio á Torre de Belém, e ha de chegar á Torre Velha. Estas Botas são de huma construcção admiravel, e curiosa; foraõ inventadas pelo mesmo Official, que faz este passeio.

L I S B O A :

NA OFF. DE JOAQUIM THOMAZ DE AQUINO BULHÕES.

Anno de 1811.

Com Licença da Mesa do Desembargo do Paço.

fixed the time and place for the realization.

He pledged himself to the whole population of Lisbon to walk from Belem-quay to the opposite side of the river. The day mentioned in this extraordinary announcement arrived, and such was the eagerness to see the feat of this wonder-working-man-of-boots, that the whole city was literally emptied of its inhabitants. Enormous sums were asked for vehicles or beasts of burden, and from early dawn the busy boats incessantly plied freighted with passengers of every description, from Lisbon to Belem. This extraordinary influx of so many thousand persons exhausted the ordinary supply of provisions in that and the adjacent bairros. Midday came and the expectation was on tiptoe; every eye was directed to the river, but the occasion of all this excitement appeared not. An hour passed away and no one came. Another hour and still he tarried. Slowly and sadly passed the afternoon, and not till the sun had set on the horizon could the gaping crowd be induced to believe that they had been hoaxed. Night, now rapidly closing over them, gave them an opportunity of skulking to the city without meeting the jeers and ridicule of the few who had stayed at home. This ludicrous occurrence is well remembered to this day; and many still exist who were themselves duped on the occasion.

It has given rise to a proverb, and the good citizens of Lisbon are sure to designate all attempts at a hoax as the second part of the Homem das Botas."

"It was about that time that a sacrilege was committed in Santarém, when a woman is alleged to have removed the eucharist from her mouth and to have hidden it in a chest.

During the night, the chest emitted a strange glow and when it was opened, the white cloth in which it was wrapped, was

found to be drenched in blood.

In procession and with all the religious rites, the eucharist was taken to a local church which has ever since been known as *Igreja do Milagre*.

The church hierarchy was of the opinion that the relic should be kept in Lisbon and, disregarding the protests of the people of Santarém, had it removed to Jerónimos, in Belem.

A plan was therefore conceived which would leave the relic unguarded and, as an added attraction, an imaginary British officer would perform the feat. Needless to say, that when the stunt was found to be of hoax, the relic was on its way back to the *Igreja do Milagre*, where it remains."