

The Romance on the Tree by Martha Banning Thomas

HER eyes were blue
And her cheeks were pink,
She was dressed in the latest style:
Her hair was curled,
And in all the world,
She had the prettiest smile.



His eyes were black,
And he wore a coat
Of vivid, beautiful red,
His shoes were shined,
And he looked refined
From his toes to the top of his head.

"I wonder if he
Could care for me,"
She thought with a gentle sigh,
"He looks so trim,
I'm fond of him,
And his collar stands up high."



He glanced her way
As if to say,
"I wish I could get nearer,
For at every glance
You do entrance
My heart . . . and but grow dearer."

So there they hung
On the Christmas tree,
A doll and a soldier-boy,
And they longed to know
Each other so
With a wistful kind of joy.



At early dawn
On Christmas morn
A child came down the stair,
"I'll marry," said she,
"Those two on the tree,
For they'll make a handsome pair!"

(C), 1925, Western Newspaper Union.

King Olaf's Christmas

AT TRONDHEIM, Olaf, the king
Heard the bells of Yule-tide ring.
By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

As he sat in his banquet hall,
Drinking the nut-brown ale,
With his bearded Berserks hale
And tall.

Three days his Yule-tide feasts
He held with Bishops and Priests,
And his horn filled up to the brim;
But the ale was never too strong,
Nor the Saga-man's tale too long,
For him.

O'er his drinking-horn the sign
He made of the cross divine,
As he drank and muttered his prayers;
But the Berserks evermore
Made the sign of the Hammer of Thor
Over theirs.

The gleams of firelight dance
Upon helmet and hauberk and lance,
And laugh in the eyes of the king;
And he cries to Halfred, the Skald,
Gray-bearded, wrinkled and bald:
"Sing!"

"Sing me a song divine,
With a sword in every line,
And this shall be thy reward."
And he loosened the belt at his waist
And in front of the singer he placed
His sword.

"Quern-biter of Haakon the Good,
Wherewith at a stroke he hewed
The millstone through and through,
And the footbreadth of Thoralf the Strong
Were neither so broad nor so long,
Nor so true.

Then the Skald took his harp and sang
And loud through the music rang
The sound of that shining sword;
And the harp-strings a clangor made,
As if they were struck with the blade
Of a sword.

And the Berserks round about
Broke forth into a shout
That made the rafters ring.
They smote with their fists on the board,
And shouted: "Long live the sword—
And the King!"

But the King said: "Oh, my son,
I miss the bright sword in one
Of thy measures and thy rhymes."
And Halfred the Skald replied:
"In another 'twas multiplied
Three times."

Then King Olaf raised the hilt
Of iron cross-shaped and gilt,
And said: "Do not refuse;
Count well the gain and loss,
Thor's hammer or Christ's cross:
Choose!"

And Halfred the Skald said: "This
In the name of the Lord I kiss,
Who on it was crucified!"
And a shout went round the board:
"In the name of Christ the Lord,
Who died!"

Then over the waste of snows
The noonday sun uprose,
Through the driving mists revealed,
Like the lifting of the Host,
By incense-clouds almost
Concealed.

On the shining wall a vast
And shadowy cross was cast
From the hilt of the uplifted sword,
And in foaming cups of ale
The Berserks drank "Was-hael!
To the Lord."