

Noel---A Ballade For Christmas

The bells chime happily across the night—
The night that crowns the almost dying year—
And soon the morning, with its dawning light,
Proclaims that Christmas day at last is here.
The children high aloft the boar's head bring,
And as they march their merry carols sing,
While Christendom joins in their tuneful lay,
For at this season all are glad and gay.
And men and women, with their hearts aglow,
Shout out with one accord on Christmas day,
"Hail to the Yule log and the mistletoe!"

Emblems of many an old time honored rite,
Of boisterous mirth and homely, honest cheer;
The Yule log, flaming high and blazing bright;
The mistletoe, to youths and maidens dear.
See for snapdragon how they form a ring
Or in a contradance their partners swing?
Lord of merriment makes good his so briquet,
And all his mandates eagerly obey.
He wields the scepter and with loud hallo
Cries lustily, with none to say him nay,
"Hail to the Yule log and the mistletoe!"

All climates and classes own the season's might,
It rules alike the peasant and the peer;
The humblest home presents a happy sight;
The sternest judge forgets to look severe.
The very birds fly by on lighter wing;
The blustering north wind seems to lose its sting;
The old and young, the golden haired and gray,
Devote the hours to merriment and play,
And far across the crispy, crackling snow
We hear a chorus from a flying sleigh,
"Hail to the Yule log and the mistletoe!"



"HAIL TO THE YULE LOG AND THE MISTLETOE!"

The chosen theme of many a fancy's sight,
A ballad monger or a sonneteer
Yearly his Christmas poem will indite
Of a coy maiden and her cavalier.
Shakespeare full often had his merry fling,
And Milton tuned his harp to noble string;
Irving the scenes of Christmas could betray,
And Dickens its true spirit could convey.
To song and story a rich debt we owe,
And with triumphant cheer this tribute pay,
"Hail to the Yule log and the mistletoe!"

And as the sacred season circles near
All evil thoughts and themes are banished quite;
Our lives become more gentle and sincere;
Our hearts can find no room for doubt or spite.
Fawns of praise from thankful hearts uprising
To celebrate the birthday of the King,
All humbly for our brother's weal we pray
And ask a blessing on our future way;
Our generous gifts on others we bestow;
"Peace upon earth, good will to men!" we say,
"Hail to the Yule log and the mistletoe!"

ENVOY.

Spirit of Christmas, we accept thee—
Yes,
Right willingly we bow beneath thy sway!
We join our songs to those of long ago
With this refrain, for ever and for aye,
"Hail to the Yule log and the mistletoe!"
—Carolyn Wells in New York Mail.

A Christmas Suggestion.
A book cover makes a good Christmas present for the girl who is apt to be accompanied by her book. The covers come in natural lines.

Law and Matrimony

By M. QUAD

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The best off in this world's goods and the best looking widow in the village of Brunswick was Mrs. Henry Roberts. She was not only proud of herself, but the town was proud of her. She needn't have been a widow more than a year after the death of her husband, but four years had passed and no one had won her love. It was then that Farmer Johnson, widower, bought a farm near the village and settled upon it.

Farmer Johnson was a middle aged and very busy man. He made few acquaintances in the village. Three months passed, and he had never heard of Widow Roberts. Then a constable served a summons on him as defendant in a lawsuit for damages. The widow was the plaintiff.

"She claims that a one horned cow belonging to me damaged her garden \$10 worth. Never owned a one horned cow in my life."

That afternoon he went down to see the widow about it. He was very graciously received and his statement listened to and not contradicted. Instead of the last, the widow said:

"Mr. Johnson, I've seen you in church for the last five Sundays—your pew is directly ahead of mine—and you have never looked around once!"

"Mebbe not. I'm no hand to look around in church."

"Ahem! Mr. Johnson, this suit must go on!"

Mr. Johnson was at church next Sunday, but he didn't look around. What time he wasn't thinking of that lawsuit he was mad. Monday afternoon he received a second visit from the constable, and there was a second summons. This time it claimed damages for a black hog carrying the widow's gate off its hinges.

"By smoke, but what's the woman at!" he shouted as he read. "I don't own no black hog and never did."

"Better go and see her," was the advice that was followed the next day. The widow was smiling and gracious. She listened to the denial without much interest and answered:

"Mr. Johnson, you were at church again last Sunday, but you never noticed me."

"I—I guess I must have been powerfully taken up with the sermon."

"As to this suit, Mr. Johnson, it must go on!"

Mr. Johnson was not at church next Sunday. He went out and sat down with his back to a strawstack to do some thinking. He had a terror of the law, and he wondered what was coming next. He had but a few hours to wait. Monday afternoon the constable was there with the third summons.

"Now, what in Aunt Jeminy is it this time?" he shouted as the paper was put into his hands.

"The widow is suing you for running your wagon agin her fence, I believe," was the reply.

"But I haven't driven no wagon past her house in a month!"

"Better see her about it."

"I'll be hanged if I don't, and I'll talk right up to her too!"

But he didn't. Next day when he called he was received with a smile, and the widow proceeded to say:

"Mr. Johnson, you were not in church last Sunday."

"No."

"And consequently you did not see me. This suit must go on!"

"But, widder, there ain't no sense in it. I can prove that I never run into your fence."

"Yes!"

"If I had I'd have paid damages right away. And I don't own no one horned cow nor a black hog."

"No? But the suits must go on. Will you be at church next Sunday?"

"If I ain't too troubled in my mind. Three different lawsuits on me, and I ain't the man after all!"

For a time, when the next Sabbath came around, it was doubtful if Mr. Johnson would attend church. He made up his mind at the last moment, however, and put in an appearance. The widow was forgotten for the first hour, and then he suddenly turned square around and looked into her face and received a smile. He didn't know whether it meant a fourth summons next day or what, but when the benediction was pronounced he heard himself saying:

"Widder Roberts, if you don't mind I'm going to walk home with you."

"Only too happy, Mr. Roberts."

And as soon as they had left the church edifice he began:

"Widder, I never owned a one horned cow."

"I know you never did," was admitted.

"Nor a black hog."

"No, nor a black hog."

"And I never busted your garden fence."

"Surely not."

"Then why all these lawsuits?"

"Would you have noticed me without?"

"By cracky, I might not!"

"The suits will at once be withdrawn, and now that we have become friends I shall be happy to have you call at any time."

"By gum! By gum! But what a blind old bat a man can be!" exclaimed the farmer as he slapped his leg.

And he called and called, and the more he called the better they liked each other, and within less than a year he was slapping his leg again and saying:

"Dog my cats, I might have kept on being a fool and lost her!"

COSTLY KISSES AT CHRISTMAS

AT a Christmas dinner given every year to the old folks of Hanley, the capital of the potteries district in England, a quaint ceremony is regularly observed.

At the conclusion of the meal one of the oldest of the women guests advances to the platform and kisses the mayor on both cheeks. His worship gallantly returns the salute, and the exchange of kisses continues until all the more venerable dames present have been thus honored.

In large business establishments, where the assistants live in, a great deal of kissing goes on at Christmas time. Some of the more daring spirits among the male "hands" have been known to make bets with one another as to the number of different girls they would kiss between Christmas eve and New Year's eve.

In a certain London drapery house two or three seasons ago one of these "horrid males" made a record by saluting seventeen different damsels. But he found the game was not worth the candle, for, in addition to a scratched face and a pretty severe pomelling at the hands of a victim's sweetheart, the rash youth found his services dispensed with.

At another great emporium one Christmas indiscriminate kissing created so much trouble that more than a dozen young men were dismissed. Ever since in this particular establishment even the introduction of a sprig of mistletoe during the festive season has been enough to insure instant dismissal.

A girl who appeared with a sprig of it in her blouse was ordered to put on her things and leave at once. A playful young man who merely pretended to kiss a young lady assistant was hurried off the premises with his hat and overcoat in his hand.

The Lancashire factory maid has a little kissing custom all her own that is sacred to Christmas. At this special period she will kiss an overlooker or any other male "hand" in the expectation that she will be rewarded with a shilling for her temerity.

Woe betide the ungallant worker who fails to part with the coin. He will find his coat sleeves sewed up or nailed to the wall. If the girl herself does not do this her fellow workers will.

Some of the more venturesome have been known to "get their employer



SHE WILL KISS ANY MALE "HAND."

round the neck" and kiss him, but the risks are great. If he takes the liberty kindly he will part with a sovereign; if otherwise he will part with the kisser. In one instance the master was so furious at being kissed that he closed his works until New Year's day, thus mulcting the hands in a week's wages.

A ludicrous story is told of a young Japanese engineering apprentice in connection with the Christmas custom of kissing. He was serving his time in the north of England and was astonished when a waitress at the dining rooms which he regularly frequented kissed him under the mistletoe.

On its being explained to him that a present was expected in return, he suggested a pair of gloves. The damsel, however, had heard that he was immensely wealthy and gently hinted that something for her neck would be more acceptable. When the present arrived next day she conjured up visions of a pearl necklace as she tremblingly undid the parcel. Then was disclosed to her disappointed gaze a Jap's idea of "something for her neck." It took the shape of a bar of soap.

It is interesting to recall a strange Christmas kissing custom that in times gone by was regularly observed at a certain London hostelry. This was a house known as the Pied Bull in Clerkenwell, the landlord of which was under an obligation to bestow on every woman who came in before noon and kissed him a given measure of ale.

If records can be relied on "mine host" had no lack of lady customers on the festive morn.—Tit-Bits.

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