

**SWELL GOODS**

AND

**PERFECT FIT**

DONT OVERLOOK  
THE NEW TAILOR

**N. P. Simonson**

**What the Robin Told  
The Holly Sprig**

By MARY BAIN BILTON

ON a mountain side grew a sprig of holly. Beneath, in the valley, nestled a village, and the holly could see the people moving about, the cattle going to and from the brook for water; indeed, there was constant motion, while the holly sprig was always still except when the wind set it in motion. One morning a robin lit on the holly sprig, clutching it with its tiny claws.

"How I wish I were you!" said the sprig to the bird. "You can fly anywhere and see what is going on, while I am doomed to hang here, passing my life in one spot."

"Yes," said the robin, "I can go about and see the world, and I have opportunities of learning. The other day—it was Sunday—I perched on a limb near a church and heard the clergyman say that one of the greatest blessings was contentment."

Then the robin flew away. One winter morning when the snow had fallen the holly sprig heard merry voices, sounding very loud in the moist air, coming up the mountain side, and presently a number of children approached. They were gathering holly, and one of them took hold of the little holly twig and twisted it off its parent bush. Then it was thrown into a bag with other sprigs and taken down to the village. For a time it lay perfectly still, but suddenly the mouth of the bag was opened, a hand thrust in and the holly taken out.

Then for the first time the holly sprig saw a new sight. It was in a lighted room where boys and girls were at work. The girls were tying evergreens together and making ropes of them, while the boys were standing on tables and stepadders arranging the ropes on the walls in festoons. Some of the girls were making evergreen wreaths and hanging them in the windows. One little girl took the holly sprig and hung it to a chandelier.

The holly sprig was supremely happy. How much more delightful was this than the bleak mountain side, with no change from day to day! It was somewhat disappointed when the boys and girls put out the lights and went out, leaving the room in darkness. It could see nothing, whereas in its mountain home on clear nights it could see the stars, and often the moon lighted up the trees about it and the valley below. However, in the morning the children came back to view their work, and people were coming and going all day, so that the holly sprig was not lonely. Indeed, it was charmed with its altered condition, which, it supposed, would last forever.

That day a young evergreen tree was brought into the room and stood before the chimney piece. The children brought in boxes, from which they took little wax candles and fixed them all over the tree. From other boxes they

took tinsel and all globes, span nothing beneath but the cold snow. Then some of the older people who were present went to the evergreen tree and took off boxes and packages they had hung there in the night when the children were in bed and distributed them among the little ones. Each package was marked with the name of the child for whom it was intended and was opened eagerly. The holly sprig, hanging high in the center of the room, could see everything and as each child opened its package watched eagerly to see what was being unwrapped. There was frequent clapping of hands, shouts of laughter, everything expressive of happiness.



"This is delightful," said the holly sprig to itself. "I wonder if they are going to do this often."

By and by, when the merrymaking had lasted a long while, the candles on the tree were extinguished and the children were sent to bed. Then their parents put out the lights, and the room was dark. But the holly sprig had so much to remember that it did not feel lonely during the night, expecting that it would again have plenty of company on the morrow.

In the morning before the sun was up servants came into the room and took out the evergreen from the wall. The holly sprig looked on, terrified. One of the servants said to another: "It's a pity master doesn't like to see these things about after Christmas. They would look pretty for weeks."

**The Mistletoe Bough**



(The following poem was written by Thomas Heywood, an English poet, dramatist and dramatist of considerable name; born 1577, died 1633.)

The mistletoe hung in the castle hall,  
The holly branch shone on the old oak wall.

And the baron's retainers were lithe and gay  
And keeping their Christmas holiday.  
The baron beheld, with a father's pride,  
His beautiful child, young Lovell's bride,  
While she with her bright eyes seemed to be  
The star of the goodly company.

"I'm weary of dancing now," she cried,  
"I'll tarry a moment—I'll hide; I'll hide!"

And Lovell, he sure thought it best to trace  
The dew to my secret lurking place.  
Twas the red, and her friends began  
Each to try to search and each took to scan,  
And young Lovell cried: "Oh, where dost thou  
hide?"

'Twas to come without thee, my own dear bride."

They sought her that night, and they sought her that day,  
And they sought her in vain when a week passed away.

In the highest, the lowest, the loneliest spot  
Young Lovell sought wildly, but found her not.  
And years flew by, and their grief at last  
Was told as a sorrowful tale long past.  
And when Lovell appeared the children cried,  
"See, the old man weeps for his fairy bride!"

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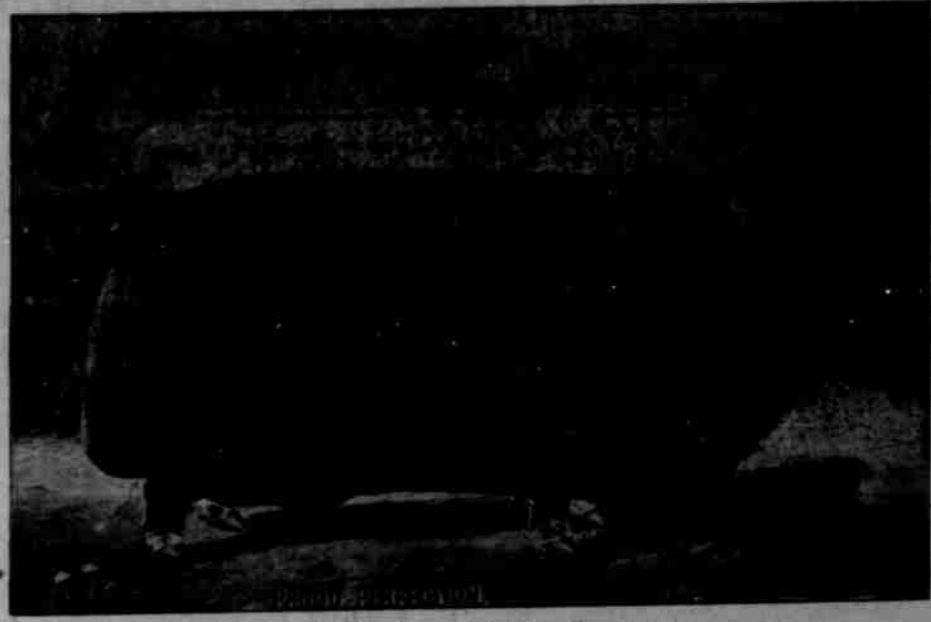
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THE HOLLY SPRIG SAW A NEW SIGHT.  
all came in together. The candles were lighted, and all stood about admiring the beautiful tree.

"What a happy change for me!" exclaimed the holly sprig. "Had not the children come and brought me down here I should now be a part of my parent-bush, out in the cold wind, with nothing above me but a murky sky."

With that the holly was pulled down and thrown into the general heap, all of which was taken down into the cellar.

Then the holly sprig wished itself back on the mountain side, where it could see the sun sparkling on the snow and icicles by day and the stars and the moon by night, but as the juice of life dried out of it it gradually lost sensation.

One spring-morning a servant came down into the cellar and looked about for some kindling. Seeing the holly sprig, she took it upstairs, put it on the hearth in the room where the tree had been, laid wood on it and touched a match to its dry leaves. As it burst into a flame it thought of its home on the mountain side, where the buds were sprouting, the soft south wind was stealing up the valley and the sweet summer time was at hand. Its last remembrance was what the robin had heard the clergyman say:

"One of the greatest blessings is contentment."

**FANTASTIC CELEBRATIONS.**

Mysteries and Moralities at Christmas in Middle Ages.

During the middle ages Christmas was celebrated by the gay fantastic spectacle of dramatic mysteries and moralities given by personages in grotesque masks and singular costumes. The scenery usually represented an infant in a cradle surrounded by the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, bulls' heads, cherubs, eastern magi and many ornaments.

Then there were the Christmas carols or some which recalled the songs of the shepherds at the Nativity. These songs were attended by dances to the rhythm of the various musical instruments. Everybody joined this merrymaking, and the wild music and singing were kept up the livelong night. Of these ancient Christmas carols but few have been preserved to us. The foregoing seemed to be the custom of all Christian nations during the middle ages.

In Italy it was the custom of the Calabrian minstrels to descend from the mountains and discourse their wild music before the shrine of the Virgin Mary. In England and on the continent the bells are still rung at midnight. Among other revels of the Christmas season were the so called feasts of fools and asses, in which everything serious was burlesqued, inferiors dressed up as their superiors and great men becoming playful, the whole showing the proneness of man to reverse the order of society and to ridicule its decencies.

In England Christmas is a term at once for a religious and merrymaking festival for every rank and age, the festivities commencing on Christmas eve and lasting till Candlemas, and every day being a holiday till Twelfth Night (Jan. 6). In the houses of nobles a "lord of misrule" formerly was appointed, whose duty it was to provide the rarest amusement and whose rule lasted from All Hallow eve till Candlemas. They lived on the fat of the land, and all of the tenants were invited in to share the general fun and merrymaking.—Houston Post.



THE OLD MAN WEEPS FOR HIS FAIRY BRIDE

A length an old chest that had long lain hid  
Was found in the castle. They raised the lid,  
And a skeleton form lay mouldering there.

In the bridal wreath of that lady fair,  
Oh, sad was her fate! In sportive jest  
She hid from her lord in the old oak chest.  
It closed with a spring—and, dreadful doom,  
The bride lay clasped in her living tomb!

**NEW YEAR'S BREAKFAST.**

In Japan It is a Religious Rite and a Serious Matter.

To a devout Japanese breakfast on New Year's day is a religious rite rather than a vulgar satisfaction of the appetite. No ordinary dishes are consumed at this meal. The tea must be made with water drawn from the well when the first ray of sun strikes it, a potpourri of materials specified by law forms the staple dish, while at the finish a measure of special sake from a red lacquer cup must be drained by whosoever desires happiness during the coming year.

In the room is placed an "elegant stand," or red lacquer tray, covered with evergreen leaves and bearing a rice dumpling, a lobster, oranges, persimmons, chestnuts, dried sardines and herring roe. All these dishes have a special signification. The names of some are homonymous with words of happy omen; the others have an allegorical meaning. The lobster's curved back and long claws typify life prolonged till the frame is bent and the beard is long; the sardines, which always swim in pairs, express conjugal bliss; the herring is symbolical of a fruitful progeny.

These dishes are not intended for consumption, although in most cases the appetite is fairly keen. The orthodox Japanese not only sees the old year out; he rises at 4 to welcome the newcomer and performs many customs before he breaks his fast.—San Francisco Chronicle.

**XMAS GREETINGS**

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