

A CHRISTMAS LEGEND

BY ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS

Like that old sweet legend
Not found in Holy Writ
And wish that John or Matthew
Had made Bible out of it.

But, though it is not a gospel,
There is no law to hold
The heart from growing better
That hears the story told:

How the little Jewish children
Upon a summer day
Went down across the meadows
With the Child Christ to play

And in the gold green valley
Where low the reed grass lay
They made them rook mud sparrows
Out of the meadow clay.

So, when these all were fashioned
And ranged in flocks about,
"Now," said the little Jesus,
"We'll let the birds fly out."

Then all the happy children
Did call and coo and cry
Each to his own mud sparrow,
"Fly, as I bid you—fly!"



THE LITTLE SPARROW WENT SOARING TO THE SKY.

But earth was the sparrows,
And earth they did remain,
Though loud the Jewish children
Cried out and cried again.

Except the one bird only
The little Lord Christ made,
The earth that owned him master,
His earth heard and obeyed.

Softly he leaned and whispered,
"Fly up to heaven, fly!"
And swift his little sparrow
Went soaring to the sky.

And silent all the children
Stood awestruck looking on
Till deep into the heavens
The bird of earth had gone.

I like to think for playmate
We have the Lord Christ still
And that still above our weakness
He works his mighty will.

That all our little playthings
Of earth and hope and joy
Shall be by his commandment
Changed into heavenly joys.

Our souls are like the sparrows
Imprisoned in the clay—
Bless him who came to give them
Wings Upon a Christmas day.

Most Liberal Christmas Givers.
The big private banking houses of Wall street are the most liberal rewarders at Christmas, just as they are the heaviest salary payers throughout the year. The greatest house in the street has been known to give 100 per cent bonus to all employees at New Year's—that is, double pay for the entire year. In that firm New Year's is the greater day. Nobody has ever explained exactly why it is preferred to Christmas. Often the house gives 40 per cent. But, like other private banking firms, it never lets it get out what bonus it will pay for fear that the size of the gift will be taken by the world to indicate the state of prosperity of the firm's preceding year. Every year the amount of the bonus naturally does leak out afterward through the people who get pieces of it and who lunch with benefited ones from other banking houses. So it is that almost everything in Wall street leaks out through the amiable weaknesses of luncheon gossip.

The "Little People's" Christmas.
Long ago, in Merry England, the popular belief was that the "little people" of the forest come at Yule time to join in the Christmas festivities with mortals. Now, it is well known that the "little people" do not like to be seen and will not venture where there is any possibility of prying human eyes finding them. So, in order to please their sprightly little guests, rich and poor provide the tiny friends with hiding places of thick, green wreaths and festoons, where they can look on the revellies unseen.

CHRISTMAS GAMES



A FAVORITE old Christmas sport, which is still played frequently by persons of English descent, is that known as snapdragon. A quantity of raisins is deposited in a broad, shallow bowl and brandy or some other spirits poured over the fruit and ignited. The bystanders endeavor by turns to grasp the raisins, plunging their hands through the flames, this requiring both courage and rapidity of action. While the sport is going on the lights are extinguished that the lurid glare of the burning spirits may produce the weirdest possible effect.

In this amusement some persons have traced the remains of the druidic ordeal by fire. While the game is on the following lines are chanted:

Here he comes with flaming bowl,
Don't be mean to take his toll!
Snap! Snap! Dragon!
Take care you don't take too much,
Be not greedy in your clutch,
Snap! Snap! Dragon!

With his blue and lapping tongue
Many of you will be stung,
Snap! Snap! Dragon!
For he snaps at all that comes,
Snapping at his feast of plums,
Snap! Snap! Dragon!

But old Christmas makes him come,
Though he looks so fee-fa-fum!
Snap! Snap! Dragon!
Don't be fear him, but be bold—
Out he goes, his flames are cold!
Snap! Snap! Dragon!

MISFIT ANSWERS.

For the many jolly gatherings of Christmas week a game or two may be in order. Here is one that will help the young folks have a good time:

Let one of the party go out of the room and those remaining choose three objects, to be called respectively No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3. These objects may be either persons or things or a combination of both. Choice is not limited in any way. When the player comes in he is asked what he will do with No. 1, then with No. 2, and so on. If the answers he gives are possible in connection with the object or person represented by the numbers he passes and another is sent out. If not he must go out again.

Suppose, for instance, independence hall is chosen for No. 1, Roosevelt for No. 2 and the cow that jumped over the moon for No. 3. If in answer to "What will you do with No. 1?" he replies, "I will paint it pea green," in answer to No. 2, "I will send it a letter," and to No. 3, "I will write a poem about it," he would pass. But if any one answer had been an impossibility, as, for instance, if in answer to No. 2 he had said, "I will make honey out of it," he would have to try over again.

KING AND QUEEN.

A jolly Christmas diversion is the game called king and queen. This game requires an equal number of girls and boys. One boy is chosen king and a girl queen.

The king and queen choose their respective followers, and each one is given a number.

Then they all form a circle. At the same moment the king and queen call a number, and the two players bearing the numbers run around outside the circle, the queen's after the king's.

If she catches him before he completes the circle he has to go over to her side, and if she does not she becomes a king's follower. The side that has the most followers wins.

Self Peeling Banana.

If you want to create wonderment and laughter at the Christmas dinner table take a banana and just start the peel, or covering, at one end, enough to uncover it an inch or so. Now insert this end into the neck of an empty bottle. The banana will be drawn into the bottle, peeling itself as it does so.

OLD FASHIONED KABAK.

An old fashioned game which is always amusing at the Christmas gathering is kabak. In this absurd pastime the leader says to the one who sits at his right hand, "My ship has come home from China?" The other then asks, "What has it brought you?" The leader makes reply, "A fan." Thereupon with his right hand he makes gestures as if fanning himself. The next player then takes the place of the leader in stating that his ship has come home from China. The questions and answers are repeated as before until the second player is also engaged in fanning himself.

In this manner the round of players is made, and at the end all are industriously working an imaginary fan with their right hands.

The leader then begins the second round with a similar remark, from which is evolved the fact that he has received two fans, and he illustrates this by fanning himself with both hands. This, in turn, makes a round of the company until all are waving both hands to and fro.

The leader then begins the third series, making three fans in fancy by swaying his right foot back and forth. Then he includes the left foot. Finally the head is nodded. The effect of a whole company engaged in swaying their hands, their feet and heads is altogether ludicrous.

There are many Christmas amusements which depend for their fun on the failure of the players to perform any designated task. Such, for example, is that where each person with blindfolded eyes tries to draw the outlines of a pig. Often the unfortunate subject of the sketch will have an eye in its side and a tail on its head, with a general appearance unlike anything else in air or on earth.

WHO HAS THE BUTTON?

The old game of "Button, button, who has the button?" may be played in a new way at the Christmas merry-making. The players sit in a circle. Then the leader takes a button and holding it between his hands to conceal it, goes around the circle. Each player holds his or her palms together and as the leader goes around he presses his hands between those of the other players in turn, saying to each, "Hold fast what I give you," being careful not to show into whose hand he drops the button.

When the circuit has been made the leader goes to the first player and says, "Button, button, who has not got the button?" and this person must answer, naming some one that he supposes hasn't it. Thus he proceeds around the ring until all have answered this question according to their belief, when the leader cries, "Button, button, arise!" and the button holder does so.

Then if any one has guessed that the person who really held the button did not hold it he becomes a "ghost" and is out of the charmed circle. The player who held the button becomes leader, and the game goes on. If no one is caught, however, the game proceeds as before, the leader changing places with the player who held the button.

The "ghosts" can only become mortal and again join the circle when they can get some player in the circle to speak to them, and then that mortal must take the "ghost's" place.

THE FROG RACE.

This is a capital Christmas game. The frogs, made of cardboard.

Each frog is threaded on a string, which later is secured at one end to a chair. The other end of the string is manipulated by the player in a series of tugs which jerk the frog along the floor.

It works well on a thick carpet, but should not be put on oilcloth or anything slippery, like parquet or polished boards, for a certain amount of resistance is needed.

As the frogs should be a fair distance apart, allow a chair for each string and tie this to the leg. Ask some one to sit upon the chair so that the jerks, which are sometimes very energetic, may not pull over the starting posts.

Fasten a white tape across the carpet with pins. The first frog that gets over this wins a prize.

The competitors desire speed, but the leisurely manner in which the frogs often respond creates shrieks of laughter from onlookers, especially when the race is a close thing.

MUSICAL THIMBLE HUNT.

Even the very small children find hunt the thimble a delightful game. The home folks may play it with the youngsters or they may play it when other Christmas fun runs low.

One of the company hides the thimble, while the one who is to hunt for it leaves the room. When it is properly hidden some one sits at the piano and plays, and the one who is to hunt for it comes in. Not a word is to be spoken, but when the hunter is near the hidden thimble the piano music must be loud, and when he goes away then the music must be low. It is much more fun than the old way of calling "hot" and "cold."

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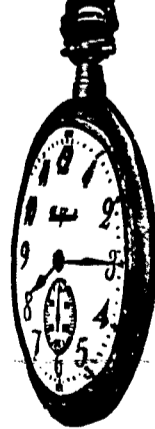
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