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Noel: A Ballade for Christmas

Carolyn Wells

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 Misrule makes good his sobriquet,
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 climes 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!"

The chosen theme of many a fancy's flight,
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 dole or spite.
Paeans of praise from thankful hearts upspring
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 — yea,
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!"

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