

Light Verse

MERRY CHRISTMAS

AS Christmas-time comes on apace,
I tear my hair, I hide my face.
Though other guys are lined with zinc,
I do not have one sou—just think!—
To buy my kiddies boots and gums
And dolls and balls and horns and drums.
My cash is nit, my credit nix,
So Christmas finds me in a fix.
The porter grins, the bell-hop smiles—
I notice all their little wiles!
The waiter grabs my hat and coat;
He little knows he is the goat!
The ashman and the garbage gent
Are only on my pleasure bent;
The maid, the cook, the chimney-sweep—
Oh, it would make the angels weep
To see the way they sprint around
Without one grouch, without one sound!
My poor wife, too, she ought to ken
That I go busted now and then;
But in her smiling eyes I see
Just what she thinks she'll get from me!
Now, if I scheme all day and night,
And sweat and toil, perhaps I might
For my own kids buy woolen mitts—
The kind that my old granny knits;
And give good-will to all the help—
Oh, can't you hear those hussies yelp?
Then draw the veil, and do not dwell
On that same wife that loves me well
When Christmas morning she shall see
A picture postal sent by me!

H. R. Macaulay

THE CHANNEL

THEY played a giddy rag-time thing
In measure with the vessel's beat,
And then a song with luring swing
To time a Spanish dancer's feet;
And those who heard laughed out to see
The young folks frolic at its call;
But to the Channel's history,
Its legends and its mystery,
They gave no thought at all.

'Twas here, his courtiers' boast to shame,
Canute once bade the waves be still;
'Twas here the ambitious Cæsar came
With Roman arms to work his will;

And fathoms, fathoms deep below,
In graves unnumbered and unwept,
To which they sank long years ago
O'erpowered by storm and earthly foe,
Old Spain's grim galleons slept.

But those aboard, what reckoned they
Of Rome and Spain and British lore?
They only saw the lighthouse ray
Flash out its signal from the shore;
They only heard the merry band
Blare music to the dancing waves;
And, wheeling gaily, hand in hand,
With hearts that could not understand,
They danced o'er nations' graves.

Annie Johnston Crim

IFS FOR HUSBANDETTES

IF you can keep your wife when all around you
Are losing theirs and wondering at you;
If you can stay at home when all men hound you,
And make up faces at their hounding, too;
If you can work and not get tired of working,
If you can make a fire or bed or tart,
Or, being weary, don't give way to shirking,
And yet don't look too big or talk too smart;

If you can vote and never cast a ballot;
If you can talk and never make a speech;
If you can wield a gavel or a mallet,
Yet earnestly aver you scorn them each;
If you can bear to hear your one-time platform
Twisted about to sound like speech of fools,
While lovely woman, with a slim or fat form,
Proceeds to mangle parliamentary rules;

If you can make one heap of all your housework,
And get things clean, and brush up here and there,
And like a patient, humble little mouse work,
And never breathe a word of any swear;
If from your kitchen apron you unpin you,
And serve the meals long after they are done,
And so keep on when there is nothing in you
Except the little lunch you ate at one;

If you can telephone and keep your patience,
Or talk with cooks, nor use the common tongue;
If you can welcome all your wife's relations,
And never get all nervous or unstrung;

If you can fill the children's little tummies,
And dry their footies when they come in wet—
You'll be one of the noble row of dummies,
And what is more, you'll be a husbandette!
Carolyn Wells

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

WHEN cometh Christmas, and you think
 of me,
Fair Chloe of the starry eyes, I seek
No gift of heavy cost in purse to thee,
But just one of those roses fair to see
That bloom so temptingly upon thy cheek.

Or, if perchance a rose you cannot spare,
I'll satisfaction find in sundry sips
Upon those luscious sweets that blossom
 there—
Whose like, indeed, I find not elsewhere—
Upon your soul-inviting cherry lips!

Should that be still too much, I'll be content
If in this crowded hour of Yule-tide glee
You'll step aside from scenes of merriment,
And from your store of bliss let there be
 spent
One simple little sigh of love for me!
John Kendrick Bangs

DEFEATED

A WAY with him, a manly stride,
He had, which may not be denied;
Maids marveled at his classic face,
Yearned for his tender-strong embrace,
Stared at his profile, wonder-eyed.

They worshiped him; they deified
This young Apollo in his pride,
Who had, in every movement's grace,
A way with him.

Filled with his high conceit, he tried
To break the heart of one maid; sighed
Upon her door-step; to each place
Followed her in a maddened chase.
Turning, at last, she coldly cried:
 "Away with him!"
Charles Hanson Towne

THE SAILOR'S RETURN

I LEFT the sea "forever,"
I broke her ancient thrall,
I would have done with rolling deeps
And decks that rise and fall;
But up the roads I travel
And on the very breeze
There follows, follows, follows
The spell that is the sea's.

The clouds that hang above me
Are islands in a blue

As clear as tropic waters
That I have idled through,
And every flowing river
Is like the changing tide
That fills the salt sea marshes
Along the ocean side.

The wind among the wheat-fields
Makes billows in the grain,
Like stately deep-sea gray-backs
That lift and sink again;
By day I can't escape her,
And in the night it seems
I walk a reeling freighter
And sail the sea in dreams.

She smiles at me in picture,
She calls to me in song,
For painter folk and poet folk
Have served her well and long;
And is her magic broken,
Her glamour from me hurled?
Nay, once again upon a ship
I'll sail across the world!

Berton Braley

PRECAUTIONS

GET out my oaken strong-box, Jane, and find
my trusty key;
Two schoolgirl friends are coming down to spend
a week with me.
My hairpins put in first of all, and then my
French cold-cream,
My handkerchiefs and beauty pins and "violet
supreme."

This powder's ninety cents a box—I call that very
dear,
Though with discreet and careful use a box will
last a year.
But if to-night I leave it out, how soon 'twill
empty be!
Two schoolgirl friends are coming down to spend
a week with me.

With loving care I lay away my treasured silken
hose,
Or soon they'd be pathetic shreds with neither
heels nor toes.
I'll place within the topmost drawer some pairs
of cotton lisle;
The girls won't want to borrow them—so farewell
for a while!

Well, now I think perhaps I've laid away sufficient
store
To make a dainty toilet when this jolly lark is
o'er.
If father was a millionaire I should not have to be
So prudent and so circumspect when girls come
home with me!

B. A. Robinson