

Love Me, Love My Dog

A Christmas Story by Lord Ernest Hamilton.

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Author of "The Outlaws of Marazion," etc.

WHEN it was known in the village that the Duchess was going to spend Christmas at the Castle, there was, as you may believe, a subdued excitement that shimmered in the bosoms of all grades from the "Three Bells" to the Vicarage; and when on the 18th day of December the great lady herself drove up to the lodge in her fine blue coach, the whole place turned out in the crumbly snow to gaze and wonder. For though it was ten good years since the "old Duke" had died, and though the Castle had been left to the Duchess for life, this was her first visit to it as a widow, so no wonder the village stood in the snow and gaped, for duchesses are not to be met with as plentifully as sheep in a market town, as everyone knows. As to this particular one, the village could hardly call her to mind except as a self-effacing person of very mild and gentle nature. Mark this well, you will read for it has a bearing on what follows.

Mrs. Moffat, of the Grange, and her

in such matters, was simply "struck all of a heap," as the saying is. However, the feeling being by no means reciprocal, Peggy, with Jock still under her arm, span on her heel and stalked haughtily away, and the two elderly women, after a glare of absolute defiance, bestook their heaving chests, and clenched fists, and purple faces in opposite directions. On the following day Lord John put on his clump-soled boots, and trudged through the snow to the Grange. Mrs. Moffat went very red, and Miss Peggy was somewhere in the garden, and was presently relieved by the excited John stared moodily at his boots. Peggy was in attendance, growled sepulchraly.



The Night Before.



The Morning of Christmas.

SA Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, C. We have the honor to inform you that the documents of your grandfather, Earl of Langford, have come to hand. For the past few years there was no doubt as to the fact that you were the sole and true heir to the title and estates of your grandfather, Earl of Langford. It is now our duty to advise you that the title and estates of your grandfather, Earl of Langford, have been transferred to you. You are now the Earl of Langford. We have the honor to be, Sir, your obedient servant.

When Santa drove the chimney comes, I wish he'd fall and spill the drums, And wake up all the girls and boys.

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A Christmas Carol.

Quickly children gather round, Raise your choirs warbling high For the blessing that has found The earth in one family.

My dear," said his mother, getting very red, "I am dreadfully and I do not care, rats, rats, rats! Lu! Lu! Lu!" she cried, poking with the heart-brush behind the sofa. "This time Bouncer did move; in one second he had cleared the sofa, upset four photographs and a flower glass, and was burrowing with ferocious energy at the corner of the wallpaper. "Oh, you wicked fraud!" said Peggy, shaking her head at John.

When she and Mrs. Moffat had with a marked discrimination to meet one another's eyes, stiffly disposed of the weather topic, the Duchess shuffled a little shyly in her seat, and heaving forward, replied the other, uneasily. "I have been so anxious to see you, Mrs. Moffat," she said, nervously, "ever since we met last—that is to say, ever since the day when you were on the common with your dog. I have been so dreadfully afraid that in the excitement of the moment I may have said something which was capable of a double construction."

When this precaution had been carried through with doubtful success, Lord John, who had latterly shown signs of uneasiness, observed that Miss Moffat appeared to have quite a remarkable turn for surgery, and wondered whether she might not be able to do something for his second finger, which had been troubling him a good deal for some time. Peggy looked dreadfully concerned.

"I am afraid I should be no good," she said, shaking her head demurely. "Try," he suggested, holding out the injured member. "I am sure you won't hurt me."

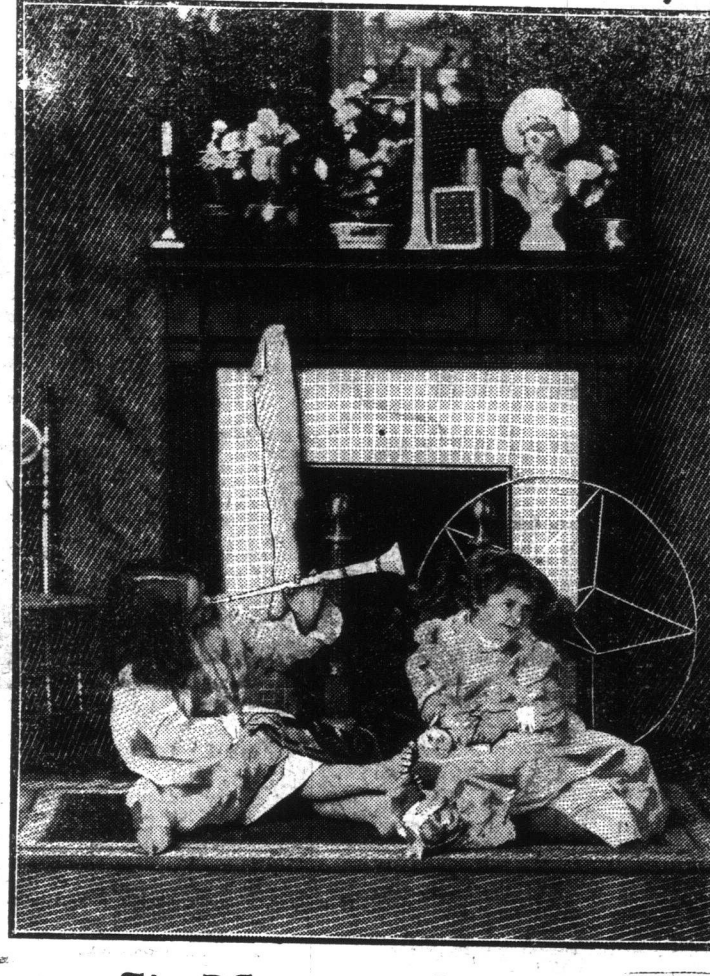
Christmas

SO now is come our joyfult feast; Let every man be jolly; Each room with ivy leaves is drest, And every post with holly Though some churls at our mirth repine, Round your foreheads garlands twine, And let us all be merry.

Now all our neighbors chimneys smoke, And Christmas blocks are burning; Their ovens they with baked meats choke, And all their spits are turning, Without the door let sorrow lie, And if for cold it has to die, We'll bury't in a Christmas Pie, And evermore be merry.

—Geo. Wither (17th Century).

frible old woman" was quite intelligible English. "Because I should be dreadfully distressed if I thought I had said anything which—er—well, of course, you must know, I couldn't have meant," the Duchess blushed pathetically, but quite unintelligibly.



The Morning of Christmas.

With naked feet and unbound hair These little girls are up bedtimes Over the stockings of these ewes— The brown-eyed maid, the eyes of blue, Where were these when good-night was said And blonde and brune went off to bed?

However, unintelligible as her plea was, it had the effect of completely breaking the back of Mrs. Moffat's offended Scotch pride, and as a consequence left her face to face with the Duchess, who was now looking at her with a compromising fact that she had called this august personage in velvet and sable "a nasty, cruel creature," and goodness knows what else besides.

"I am sure you won't hurt me," she said, shaking her head demurely. "Try," he suggested, holding out the injured member. "I am sure you won't hurt me."

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