

Jingle Bells in Latin!

Translated by Charles Mierow, PhD (1883-1961)

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For more Latin resources by Dr. Massey, visit:

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Here is the Latin text of Dr. Mierow's translation, along with reverse translation and grammatical notes by Dr. Massey.

Verse One: Nives, glacies, nox, puertia!

Snow, ice, night, childhood!

Nota bene: alternate form - pueritia

Risus decet, nunc decent carmina!

Laughter is proper, now songs are proper!

NB: impersonal verb decet: to be proper, fitting.

Laetos iuvat nos ire per agros!

It helps us, happy, to go through the fields!

Traha fert velociter, et cachinemus nos!

The sleigh brings (us) quickly, and let us laugh/cackle!

NB: cachinemus: hortatory subjunctive.

Chorus: Tinniat, tinniat tintinnabulum.

Rings, rings the bell.

Labimur in glacie post mulum curtum!

We slide on the ice behind a castrated mule!

NB: Deponent verb labor, from which we get the English word lapse (a slip). Worth memorizing is the quote "lapsus calami" a slip of the pen. As for "castrated mule," while it seems harsh, that's life on the farm.

Verse Two: Me nuper miserum temptavit lunae lux!

Recently the light of the moon tempted miserable me!

Mox assidebat tum puella facti dux!

Soon she was sitting by (me), then the girl was the leader of the deed!

NB: Allusion to Aeneid 1.364, dux femina facti (referring to Queen Dido).

Vecti subito in nivis cumulos

Suddenly (we are) drawn into piled snow

NB: Poetic accusative plural of 3rd Declension noun, nivis.

Caballus est perterritus et tunc eversi nos!

The horse is terrified and then we (are) overturned!

NB: Latin equus survives today only in Romanian iapa, 'mare' (cf. Romanian apa 'water'). The other Romance languages preserved the colloquial word caballus.

Verse Three: Solum scintillat, nive candidum,

The ground sparkles, white with snow,

Repetatur nunc concentus carminum!

Now may a concert of songs be sought again!

Canities abest morosa omnibus!

Old age, hypercritical to everyone, is absent!

Puellulas cum pueris delectat hic cursus.

Little girls with boys like this course.

NB: puellulas is a diminutive from puella (which is somehow a diminutive from puer!). delectat literally means 'pleases'. Here it is rendered similarly to Spanish gustar.