

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Oranges and Lemons 2

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Oranges and lemons
Say the bells of St. Clements
I'll give you five farthings
Say the bells of St. Martin's
When will you pay me
Say the bells of Old Bailey
When I grow rich
Say the bells of Shoreditch
When will that be
Say the bells of Stepney
I do not know
Says the great bell of Bow

These words are from memory, I don't know where I learned them or if they are the correct spellings. My question is: does anyone know whether the churches listed, have any relationship to the words? For example, Old Bailey (I believe) is a court, so "When will you pay me" would relate to that. Perhaps St. Clements is (or used to be) a fruit growing region, or a market??? Thanks to all
- RS

That seems pretty close to what I learned at school with the exception "I owe you five farthings". We were told that the tune was built from the sounds of the bells of each on the churches. So I assumed that it was the church at Old Bailey, not that I ever bother to find out if one exists. I am not sure whether St Clement's is St Clements Dane in the Strand or St Clement's of East Cheap. It's amazing how we accept these things as kids without thinking about them.

Then there is the game that is played to that tune which has the ending:
Here comes the candle to light you to bed
and here comes the chopper to chop of your head
Chip, Chop, Chip, Chop, the last man's head.

I am sure that some one will come up with more accurate information.
BH

It must be Saint Clements Dane in the Strand, because it plays Oranges and Lemons from the steeple. I have no idea if there was ever a market in the area. It was Samuel Johnson's home parish for quite a while and his statue stands outside.

Aren't the lyrics in Mother Goose? I don't have a copy
to hand but you mothers and fathers out there can check.
That might be the making of another thread.
My mother used to sing to me almost every rhyme in there
(and in Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass) which she had
presumably learned from her mother, a Londoner.
I wonder if anyone has ever recorded the whole set.
She never did sing Old Grimes Is Dead and I've often wondered
what the tune to it is.

Old Bailey was not a church, but I think the rest of them are.
I suspect that the rhyme is older than Wren, who did most of his work on
London churches after the Great Fire in 1666. (The present St. Clements
Dane is for the most part a reconstruction dating from the 1950's, the
church having been hit by incendiary bombs during WWII) I suspect that
most of the rhymes in
What does this annotated version say on the subject? I am also curious
to know if the tunes to which the rhymes are set are original, or if they
were concocted later. There are of course different versions of Mother Goose,
some of which have altered to suit politically correct tastes.

BH
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