

A Page of Christmas Verse

The Glad Good News.

DID you hear a little bird, a little bird a-singing;
Did you hear a little bird in the very early morn?

Did you hear the merry bells, the merry bells a-ringing,

To tell us all the glad good news that Jesus Christ is born?

It is a strange and wondrous tale, a marvellous old story,

It happened in the distant time, the far-off "long ago";

To us there came the King of kings, the Lord of life and glory,

A helpless babe—a little child—a weary man of woe.

A little child! A maiden fair her watch beside Him keeping!

And angels wondered as they gazed, and shook their starry wings;

They saw their Lord before them—He, an infant calmly sleeping—

O love of God, surpassing all mysterious hidden things!

Then praise we now our Father, God, with all our life's endeavor;

His loving Christ hath borne the cross, that we may wear the crown;

From death to life our souls may rise to dwell with Him forever;

For this He left His throne, and "laid His regal honors down."

Listen to the little bird, the little bird a-singing,
The mystic bird that sings at eve and very early morn;

She singeth in our heart of hearts—Christmas bells are ringing;

And so we know the good glad news that Jesus Christ is born!

Christmas Bells.

I HEARD the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,

And wild and sweet

The words repeat

Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,

The belfries of all Christendom

Had rolled along

The unbroken song,

Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till, ringing, singing on its way,

The world revolved from night to day,

A voice, a chime,

A chant sublime,

Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth

The cannon thundered from the south,

And with the sound

The carols drowned

Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent

The hearthstones of a continent;

And made forlorn

The households born

Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;

"There is no peace on earth," I said;

"For hate is strong,

And mocks the song

Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:

"God is not dead; nor doth He sleep!

The wrong shall fail

The right prevail,

With peace on earth, good-will to men!

The Mother Mary.

MARY, to thee the heart was given,
For infant hands to hold,
Thus clasping, an eternal heaven,
The great earth in its fold.

He came, all helpless, to thy power,

For warmth, and love, and birth,

In thy embraces, every hour

He grew into the earth.

And thine the grief, O mother high,

Which all thy sisters share,

Who keep the gate betwixt the sky

And this our lower air.

And unshared sorrows, gathering slow;

New thoughts within thy heart,

Which through thee like a sword will go,

And make thee mourn apart.

For if a woman bore a son

That was of angel-brood,

Who lifted wings ere day was done,

And soared from where he stood;

Strange grief would fill each mother-moan,

Wild longing, dim and sore;

"My child! my child! He is my own,

And yet is mine no more."

So thou, O Mary, years on years,

From child-birth to the cross,

Wast filled with yearnings, filled with fears,

Keen sense of love and loss.

—George MacDonald.

A Christmas Prayer.

O holy Child of Bethlehem!

Descend on us, we pray;

Cast out our sin and enter in,

Be born in us to-day.

We hear the Christmas angels

The great glad tidings tell;

O come to us, abide with us,

Our Lord Emmanuel.

—Phillips Brooks.