

Centennial Christmas.

ELLIS, ROBERTSON & Co.]

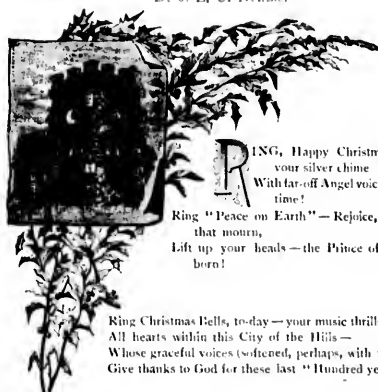
SAINT JOHN, N. B., 1883.

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WRITTEN FOR "CENTENNIAL CHRISTMAS."

CHRISTMAS BELLS, 1883.

BY J. E. U. NEALE.



RING, Happy Christmas Bells!
your silver chime
With far-off Angel voices keepeth
time!
Ring "Peace on Earth" — Rejoice, O hearts
that mourn,
Lift up your heads — the Prince of Peace is
born!

Ring Christmas Bells, to-day — your music thrills
All hearts within this City of the Hills —
Whose graceful voices (softened, perhaps, with tears),
Give thanks to God for these last "Hundred years!"

O let their glad thanksgiving joyful make
The hearts of all God's poor — for His dear sake;
Let no one child in all St. John, at least,
Have need of wherewithal to "Keep the Feast!"

It is the *Children's Feast*, who have a right
To have their own sweet way on Christmas night;
And we, the older, must give place to them,
For Christ was once a child in Bethlehem!

Remember, too, the sick — whose weariness
Needeth a kindly hand to soothe and bless;
Ah, who can tell what wistful longing dwells
For them, in the sweet sound of Christmas Bells!

And you at whose Firesides the "Vacant chair"
Stands, sadly waiting one who once sat there;
The well beloved — without whose dear face
The world is but an empty barren place!

Be comforted — God took them — that is best;
Make some one in *their* stead a welcome guest —
And God shall bless you with a double share
Of love and joy to fill that vacant chair.

And you whose children gather round your knee
This Christmas tide — your joy and pride — Ah! me,
Think of the little ones as fair as they,
Who share no tender mother's love to-day!

Know what you give to *them* to God is given —
And *orphans' prayers* are always heard in Heaven!
And, perhaps, some "boon" you've asked for long in vain,
Thro' their sweet guileless prayers you may obtain!

With generous hearts give noble charity
That knows not race, or creed; but royally
With lavish hand brings warmth and food and light
To all who need them on this blessed night!

WRITTEN FOR "CENTENNIAL CHRISTMAS."

CHRISTMAS: A FANTASIA.

BY RICHARD M. D.

"**M**AN grows gloomier and gloomier," says a contemporary writer, "but the child-like element in him is happily not dead yet." Nor will it die while the remembrance of last year's Christmas lives, and there is a child left to anticipate with beating heart the arrival of another, and to renew the wish: "Papa, I would like that there was a Christmas day every week!" We honor Mr. Grad-Grind, with his strict regard to matter-of-fact; but we do not love him. Why should it be forbidden to set imagination free, now and then, to wander at its own sweet will in the realms of fantasy? Let the children lead us for a little. Let us all for an hour or two revive the vanishing joys of childhood.

Christmas sends us back, by its customs of festivity and song and charity to centuries long antecedent to His birth who has made the day and period specially his own. The Magi came to welcome the babe in Bethlehem; and, ever since, Paganism in all its forms has laid its best at the feet, and left its worthiest in the train of Jesus. With a strange medley of Christian and Pagan rites, — relics of the Roman Saturnalia, when the very slaves enjoyed one day in the year of unlimited license, — relics of German revelry and Druidical superstitions, — we celebrate the birthday anniversary of the world's Redeemer. What matter that the Antiquarians have not yet succeeded in assuring themselves that the 25th of December is verily the day? Let them crack their nuts. We shall crack ours with none the less enjoyment and fearlessness of dyspepsia. Stand beneath the Mistletoe, my fair Lady Clara. Let the light of the Yule-log play with your shadow on the wall. What matter that, in yonder conventicle, some sour Puritan is proving to the heart's content of himself and his acidified hearers that mirth is the mark of the beast, and the sin that hath never forgiveness? "Jack shall pipe and Jill shall dance. For Christmas comes but once a year, and therefore let's be merry!"

Let me give the little children a reason for loving our Queen in connection with the festivities of Xmas. The good St. Nicholas is perhaps the most widely popular in connection with festive-mirth of all the saints in the Calendar. A native of Asia-Minor, the adopted patron of Russia, the most honored of all the saints in southern Italy, in England, some four hundred churches are named after him; and now, in America, on one evening in the year, Santa Klaus is more devoutly thought of by at least one-half of the population — the juveniles — than is their Xmas pudding. Come away with me to yonder Alms-house, usually so prosaically grim. On this — on Xmas-eve — there is mirth in the Alms-house. St. Nicholas has planted a mysterious tree in a corner, which, all are assured, bears fruits unknown to earthly gardens. Oh, the delight of the little children! Aye, and of the grey-beards also; hoary sinners, some of them: but for one-half hour or so, they feel good. The introduction of the Xmas-tree with its lamps and toys and fruits and flowers and gifts that make young eyes glisten, and young voices shriek with delight, is due, among the English speaking