

pipe, then related stories of days, when camp fires flickered in the rigid night, and the watchful Indians crept upon them unawares. He told a sad tale of tyrannic reign, when the conscience of royalty slept, and carnage, devastated the land—of the bravery of men in the face of danger, and the noble heroism of women: while through it all, thanks were offered for the meagre mercies of Heaven, bestowed upon them."

Stroking Tom's hair, his mother spoke: "Ah, son! Little you know of the days when women's eyes were brimming with tears, and their hearts were lacerated with woe! When Columbia wept over her countless dead; and the Civil War left famine and misery in its wake. But Tom, dear, the Prince who came to earth on Christmas morn, filled our weeping eyes with love's light, and our hearts with a deep peace. Would you be less brave than the women of your mother's time?"

"Be not a churl, lad," spoke Tom's aunt, "in the midst of peace, plenty, and health, you sit grumbling, instead of being thankful and joyful with the merry-makers. For shame, Tom Andrews, for shame."

"Shame, shame," echoed the chorus; "shame, shame," shrieked the sobbing wind, and "shame, shame," hissed the logs, spluttering on the hearth.

Tom's head fell forward on his breast; then his mother, with her arms about her son's neck, said: "Hush, he sorrows of his selfishness, and repents his repining."

"Come lad, drink with us," said his father, "a truce to discontent, and may this draught drown it forevermore."

Each merry guest held a brimming glass, and all stood watching Tom, who groaned and attempted to rise.

"Give us a toast, a toast!" cried the company in chorus.

Then Tom stood in their midst and

raising a steaming glass said: "Down with the demon discontent, may the Prince of Peace, send us joy."

Every flagon was quickly drained; then, as if by magic the gay carnival crowd melted away,—the punch bowl disappeared, and the bare table top gleamed like a ghost in the flickering firelight, for the torches were extinguished. It was midnight, and a deep silence reigned in the room. The last live ember in the grate fell with a hiss,—and Tom started up, rubbing his eyes; then, across the snow pealed the Christmas chimes, and from the village church rang the chorus: "Gloria in Excelsis Deo."

The crimson rose of dawn, had rolled away the silvery shadows, and the scintillating snowdrifts were shot with scarlet gleams, when the villagers on their way to early morning service, passed the cottage of Tom Andrews. Hitherto his house had been a place to be passed by hurriedly, but now people lingered, for there in the window contentedly smoking his pipe, and smiling serenely stood none other than Tom Andrews. A passer-by waved him a message, and was surprised to receive a cordial return. Then, from the group came a child, and opening the creaking gate she knocked timidly at the door.

Quickly Tom threw wide the door.

"A Merry Christmas, Mister Man," she lisped.

Snatching her to his heart Tom kissed the sunny curls, and answered: "God bless your little heart, the same to you, and many of them."

And thus may this Christmas forever  
disperse

All the gloom from your brow that is  
meant by a hearse

And may joy fill your soul wherever you  
go

Is the greeting and toast of good  
Westward Ho!