

## CHRISTMAS COMES.

Dark are the days when the year grows old.

Dark and dreary the winter cold;  
And far away on the frozen marsh  
The wild bird's cry sounds shrill and harsh;

And the dry reeds bow to the north wind's blast,  
And the black skies frown, and the snow falls fast.

But the Lord was born in the winter time,

And the joy-bells rang with a tender chime;

For his love has kindled a warmer glow  
Than the golden days of summer know.  
And we love the Christ-child's birthday dear,

Best of all the days of the year.

Into the darkness he brought the light,  
Sun who rose at dead of night,  
When the angels came to the cradle stall  
To worship the child who is Lord of all.  
Sorrow and sin and poverty sore,  
He turns to glory for evermore.

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## Happy Days.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 16, 1905.

## CHRISTMAS BELLS.

Mildred Thorpe was going on an errand. An odd errand it seemed too.

"Why, mother dear, it seems so silly to carry a bunch of holly to an old woman. What can she want with it?"

"Never mind, Mildred, take the basket, and don't lose out the holly, whatever you do," answered her mother, with a gentle sigh, as she closed the door against the reluctant little girl.

Suddenly the chimes from the church steeple rang out:

Glory to God in the highest,  
Glory to God, glory to God,  
Glory to God in the highest,  
Peace on earth, good will to men.

Mildred's face lightened. "I love the chimes," she said, and she began to sing, "Ring, Happy Bells, Across the Snow." She hardly noticed how fast the time went until she found herself opposite the little house where her mother had sent her.

"Ah, my holly, my beautiful Christmas holly!" the old woman exclaimed, as soon as Mildred was inside the tiny room. "Your mother never forgets. Christmas would not seem Christmas to me without the holly. You'd like to know why I love it so? I wasn't always poor. I lived in the South, and on our lawn grew great trees of holly. At Christmas the whole house used to be trimmed with the bright green leaves and the red berries. My home has gone, my children are dead—your mother used to play with them, and she knew how they loved the holly. I see my happy days again when I look at the bunch of holly."

She lifted out the bunch lovingly. Underneath was an envelope, which Mildred left upon the table, then slipped softly out.

There was money in the envelope which would help to make the dear old woman comfortable for a long time.

The bells were still ringing.

"I'm glad that Jesus has a mere beautiful home in heaven prepared for the dear old woman who has lost her earthly home," thought Mildred.

## LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD.

"When papa and I were driving to-night, we saw Little Red Riding Hood," said Mrs. MacKay, as she perched Teddy on the arm of the sofa, while Rhea scrambled up on her knee.

"Nellie had pulled us up a long hill and was going slowly over the top, when we saw, sitting near the roadside, a little lady in a black and white suit, and a red hood.

"While we were watching her, she rose and went into her home, a little wooden house close to the roadside, and do you know we could hear the little ones making a great fuss inside."

"Really, mother?" asked Jack.

"Really, Jack!"

"It was a pussy," said Rhea, who had sat with folded hands. "Pussy," lisped Teddy. "Cats haven't red heads," said Jack.

"She searched about, and at last came to a stump and ran around it, tapping it hard with—"

"Oh, I know," said Jack, "a red-headed woodpecker."

"Yes, Jack, and we saw her nest. Close to the roadside stands a tall, bare tree-trunk. A branch had been broken off some fourteen feet from the ground, and in this had been pecked out a little round hole, and in there, with a real wooden roof and wooden walls, live the little red-headed family.

"The little birdies have their little red heads tucked under their mother's breast now and are fast asleep, and it is quite time my curly-headed birdie was safe in his nest," said mamma, "and before we sleep we will ask our loving Father to care for the little family up in the tree trunk, and to fill the hearts of little boys with love for all his creatures, that they may do them no harm. We know God loves the little birdies, and little boys," and she took her wee boy in her arms.

"Little girls, too," said Rhea, as she slipped off her mother's knee, giving her place to Teddy.

"And big boys, mother," said Jack.

"Dad is love," whispered sleepy Teddy.

## THE LARK'S FESTIVAL.

The Chinese are very fond of having birds as pets. In almost every house one sees a bird-cage hanging up, and very pretty the cages are, the birds inside looking cheerful and well cared for.

When John Chinaman walks abroad he takes his bird-cage with him, just as we take our dogs; so that, like the fine lady who was in the habit of riding a white horse to Banbury Cross, the Chinaman has "music wherever he goes."

Once a year, in the middle of April, the festival of Paak-tai is held in Canton. Of the people who throng this temple each brings with him a lark in a cage. The cages are hung from bamboo poles, fastened across the ceiling of the temple, which is brilliantly lighted up for the occasion. The birds usually number several hundreds, and every cage is carefully covered up.

At a given signal all the coverings are removed. The astonished larks, thinking that they have overslept themselves, and for once the sun has caught them napping, make up for lost time by bursting all together into a thrilling and glorious chorus of song, which they keep up for about two hours, to the keen delight of the people present.

## "JUST LOVED ME."

Two little four-year-olds were at play on the lawn when the tiny girl slipped and fell. In a moment her small companion had helped her to her feet again, and stood with his arm about her until her sobs ceased.

"What did your little cousin do for you when you were hurt?" asked the mother a few minutes later.

"Nuffin'; he just loved me."