

CHRISTMAS.

BY BESSIE HILL.

Every home in Christendom
A Babe is born this day,
For some to worship, some to love,
And some to turn away.

The light His blessed forehead sheds
Is holy, and as bright
As when it lit the manger-stall
At Bethlehem in the night.

"Give me thy love" the Child doth plead,
Up-smiling in our face,
And as we answer, so He stills
Our longing, with His grace.

Eternal Child, and Lord of All:
Turn not Thy face away,
But hide with us in household joy
This holy Christmas day.

Oh! we did lose the star, dear Lord,
The precious offering; waste;
For we were prone to loiter, Lord,
Or miss Thee in our haste.

But Thou hast sought for us: We kneel
In reverent love, to pray
Beside the Babe of Bethlehem,
Who comes on Christmas day.

WHAT A DOLLAR DID.

A TORONTO CHRISTMAS STORY.

BY THE EDITOR.



ELL. Mary; did Mrs. Thompson pay for the sewing?" asked Mrs. Morrison, a delicate-looking woman, wasted with sickness and care, yet scrupulously neat,

as was everything in her humble apartment.

"Yes, mamma," answered an intelligent, bright-eyed child, of a strangely mature expression of countenance. "At first she said to call again, but I told her you were sick and wanted some medicine, so she gave it to me; but see what a worn, crumpled, and dirty bill it is."

"Thank God, I can now get some syrup for my cough. I slept little last night, and I did so want to be up on Christmas Day. It grieves me, darling, that I cannot get you and little Freddy the presents you used to have before papa died. Go dear, to Mr. Wood's store, and get the medicine, it will soothe my cough, and I will do my best to make your Christmas, if not a merry one, as happy as I can."

"Oh, never mind, mamma, dear; it will be just splendid, and I will make a rag doll for Freddy, and he will think it ever so fine;" and the affectionate child hurried off to the store.

Wistfully the little girl eyed the brilliant dolls and toys and trinkets in the beautiful stores on Yonge street, that more happy parents than her's were purchasing to gladden bright eyes on the morrow, as with shouts of glee the well-filled stockings would be emptied almost before it was light enough to see them. But she bravely turned away, crushing down the longing in her heart, and purchased the soothing medicine, and a few, alas! too few, of the bare necessities of life—with precocious worldly wisdom making her worn and tattered dollar bill pay for as many articles as possible. Then, with a hoarded penny, buying a candy

toy for brother Fred, she hastened home through the wintry streets with more of real satisfaction in her little heart than many a pampered child of luxury who, surfeited with gifts, knows not the superior joy of giving.

Unnoticed, in the throng of customers that almost filled the store, stood the little son of a shoemaker, who lived in St. John's Ward, his feet exhibiting the proverbially wretched covering of the disciples of St. Crispin. As the storekeeper received the dollar from the hands of Mary Morrison, the widow's child, little Tom Needham repeated his request, "Please, sir, father wants the money for mending the boots."

"I'm too busy now, my boy," said the bustling storekeeper. But, as the little fellow turned disappointedly away, for he knew that his own chances of a Christmas dinner depended on being paid for the work, the busy salesman exclaimed, "Stay, here you are. This is just it;" and he handed him the tattered bill.

With a glad "Hurrah!" Tom burst into his father's squalid little shop, which smelt strongly of leather and wax, and was littered up with shreds and patches, and a disreputable-looking collection of old shoes. For Mr. Needham was rather a mender than a maker of these useful articles, now that almost everybody bought them at the stores ready-made from the great factories.

"Well, Tom, have you got it?" asked the rather dirty-looking craftsman, as he looked up wearily from his bench, pushing back his spectacles and revealing a brow furrowed by care, and a stubbly beard of a week's growth. The good man found the maintenance of a large family, with his decreasing business, year by year a more difficult task.

"Yes, father, here it is," shouted the light-hearted boy, not yet feeling the burden of poverty.

"Well, it is a seedy specimen," said the shoemaker, taking the soiled bill by the corner as if afraid of soiling it still more with his grimy fingers. "But it will get mother and the girls a good Christmas dinner, anyway, won't it, Tom?" and the toil-worn father went forth with loving thoughts to provide for the wants of his family. Though not much given to moralizing, he felt his lowly calling dignified and ennobled by his care for those who were, by God's providence, committed to his keeping.

The row of butcher's stalls on Yonge street was a sight to behold, with their noble roasts of beef and fat sheep and plump turkeys. But all these were too aristocratic for the shoemaker's purse; so he selected a more plebeian goose, and wended his way home with the apology for his unwonted extravagance:

"Christmas comes but once a year, and when it comes, it brings good cheer."

"Here, Tompkins," said the jolly butcher, as fat as one of his own prize sheep, to a meagre-looking man, who was selecting a cheap joint for his Christmas dinner, "here's a beef shank that will make a good pot of soup for your young kids at home; and here's that dollar I owe you for cutting wood. I don't like to go into Christmas owing anything, you know," and he handed him the bill he had just received from the shoemaker.

"Neither do I, Mr. Burroughs," said the meagre little man, with joyous alacrity. This will help me to pay my rent to Squire Bilton to-night. I shall eat my Christmas dinner, plain

as it may be, with better relish when I don't owe for the roof over my head;" and with a load of care lifted off his mind, he started for the Squire's house on Jarvis street to pay his rent.

At the end of an avenue of spiry spruces, that shivered in the wintry wind, stood the hospitable house. The warm light streamed from its curtained windows upon the frozen fountain and the arbour, dismantled of its summer covering of vines; and rich strains of music floated forth on the icy air as the Squire's young folks sang with merry glee a Christmas carol. A twinge of envy and discontent wrung the heart of the poor man as he thought of his own humble home and the scanty enjoyments of his children.

"Ah, Tompkins, is that you?" was the hearty greeting of the Squire. "Come for your Christmas-box, have you?"

"I came to pay my rent, sir," he replied, with a feeling of manly independence that made him feel at least an inch taller, as he produced the shabby bill, with others almost as bad, from his well-worn but scantily-filled purse.

"That's right, Tompkins; always pay as you go and keep out of debt. That's how I got along. But go into the kitchen. My wife has been putting up a basket of Christmas fixings for your youngsters. I always enjoy my own Christmas dinner better for knowing that my tenants are enjoying theirs. Somehow the thought of God's good gift to us kind of mellow and warms one's heart to every one." And the Squire's round, kindly face was wreathed with smiles that might have become Father Christmas himself.

As Tompkins left the house with a well-filled basket on his arm, his heart felt a good deal lighter, notwithstanding his heavy load. Not a particle of envy lingered in his bosom, but instead of murmuring at the allotments of Providence, he said to himself, "The Squire is a real good landlord, and deserves all the prosperity he enjoys. I wish there were more like him;" to which wish we heartily say "Amen!"

Shortly after, the kindly Squire, well muffled, walked down Yonge street, on charitable thoughts intent. While ordering a handsome hamper of toys and trinkets for his own family and the minister's children (he had previously ordered a parcel of books at the Wesleyan Book Room for their father), he did not forget the wants of his tenants and poorer neighbours, including the family of the sick widow, Mrs. Morrison, whom he had known in better days. Having given directions to deliver the parcels that night, as he paid for the toys and picture books for the widow's children, the storekeeper exclaimed—"Why, here is the identical dollar little Mary Morrison brought me this very night. I wonder where it has been since. It must have brought me luck, for I never did a better night's business. Here, Mrs. Flanighan, I'll make you a Christmas present of it," handing it to the Irish washerwoman, who had been waiting some time for her "Christmas-box."

"The blessings of the Holy Virgin and all the saints attend you; and long life, and a merry Christmas, and many of them to your honour," exclaimed the grateful creature, with many curtsies.

What became of the tattered bill further we know not. We think it was left at the baker's, and is, perhaps, going its rounds on its mission of

mercy yet, bringing joy and gladness to many a home.

The Christmas morning rose bright and clear. Little Freddy Morrison, for once, was up early, and soon roused the household by his tumultuous excitement. "Merry Christmas, mamma! Santa Claus did come after all, although you were afraid he wouldn't," and he emptied his well-filled stockings on his mother's bed. "And here is a book for Mary, too. I prayed God last night to send Santa Claus just as He used to when papa was alive; and so He has, you see."

"God has not forgotten us," said the widow, with her eyes glistening through her tears, as she clasped her children in her arms and covered them with kisses. "I will try not to forget His promise, that He will be a husband to the widow and a father to the fatherless."

It would have done one's heart good to see how the little Needham's enjoyed their savoury Christmas goose; and the young Tompkins' their rich beef broth and the "Christmas fixings" from the Squire's; and Mrs. Flanighan and her children their Christmas dinner, humble though it was. As the Squire sat down to his well-filled board, his rubicund face fairly shone with good nature, and he thanked God for Christmas, with its tender and sacred memories, and the kindly feelings it kindles in every heart.

And the agent by which all this happiness was communicated,—that soiled, and worn, and crumpled dollar bill,—was it not an angel in disguise? a messenger of mercy scattering blessings on every hand, and bringing gladness to many a heart?

CHRISTMAS BELLS.

THIS is the day that Christ was born!
Hark to the music sweet and wild,
That wakens glad hearts and forlorn
To greet the blessed Child!

O silver bells that ring so clear
All the wintry morning gray,
Rouse up the sleeping world to hear
That Christ was born to-day.

Ring till the children start from sleep,
Sweet with the dream of joy to be,
And clap their little hands and leap,
And shout aloud in glee.

Ring till the sorrowful ones of earth,
Whose lives are spent in toil and tears,
That leave, alas! no place for mirth
In all the dreary years,

Shall hear the tender words He said—
"Come unto Me all ye that mourn;"
And gather strength anew to tread
The path His feet have worn.

Ring loud, ring sweet, O Christmas bells,
And tune each waking soul to prayer,
The while your joyful psalm swells
Upon the wintry air,

Through misty dawn and sunshine clear,
Ring till the callous hearts of men,
Stirred with the thought of Christ so near,
Grow warm and soft again.

Ring till the tender impulse turns
To pitying thought, to generous deed;
Ring till the eager spirit burns
To succour all that need!

And while ye ring with heart and voice,
Glory to God let all men say,
And every living soul rejoice
That Christ was born to-day!

Men are sometimes accused of pride
merely because their accusers would
be proud themselves were they in their
places.