

Can You Truly Tell?

Can you truly tell
the story well,
and how
the story well
the story well
the story well

the story well
the story well
the story well
the story well
the story well

upon the ground
scattered round
filled the sky
and on high,
the morning

their sweet song,
the world
to live with men,
the best came,
the morning

the angels sang
the angels sang
the angels sang
the angels sang
the angels sang

And a Little Child Shall Lead Them.

FRASER DAILY KING

I was the day before Christmas, I had been trying hard to forget it, but we cannot control our memories. I had given strict orders to the household not to mention the word "Christmas" in my hearing, and had shut myself into my room this bright wintry afternoon only wanting to be "let alone." Even my mother irritated me, but that was my mother's control. It shone just this way a week ago to day, and I was so happy. My life was full of sun and light. Not a cloud to dim its bright rays. Not a shadow to fill the sky. The sun cannot penetrate such a lovely Christmas, my mother's little daughter and I. We were to buy stockings to please May. My mother was bringing them to us this morning when we were to be getting her and hugging her. She had been at us, jumping into bed with us. What fun we had taking down the stockings. Santa Claus had put in! I saw her sweet dimpled face, her eyes sparkling with excitement, her brown hair falling about her head. I can hear her voice, her merry laugh when she said something particularly funny. I remember how I gathered the little stockings in my hands to warm them. How busy little feet! How cruelly they were when I felt them last night. Even a mother's loving hands cannot warm them then. How can I think of Christmas with its joy and peace making when the two I loved best in the world have been taken from me? What is my home, my wealth to me? I have no one to share them! The world is a vast woman, who has her husband and children is vastly richer than I. I shut out the sun, that could cheer me up, and throw myself into the bed and cried myself to sleep. I must have slept some time when I was suddenly conscious of a soft voice. How it started me! The child had been carefully kept from me. My loss.

"Come more about the little girl, Maggie." It was a sweet voice, and I involuntarily answered my maid as she was sewing in the next room. "London is asleep and she mustn't be disturbed. If you want to stay here tonight you must be very quiet." I remembered then, that Maggie's mother came to see her occasionally, and she was carefully kept out of my room. She and May were nearly of an age—quite seven.

"The lady sick?" asked the child.

"The heart-sick dear," replied Maggie. "You know to-morrow will be Christmas, and it makes her think of her husband and little girl who were taken away."

There was a pause, and then I could hear her trying to comprehend what I was telling her about the toys Maggie had been very quiet and good, "the old-fashioned way." I never get tired of hearing her say "Elise?" Maggie answered hurriedly "Well, you know the boxes and drawers of them, the animals, woolly dogs, cats with their little things—you can think of anything you like." There is a baby as large as a real baby, and dressed like a doll.

"Maggie," breathlessly interrupted

the child "Does it really and truly go to sleep?"

"Yes indeed," answered Maggie. It opens and shuts its eyes just as natural! And it has a lovely cradle all lined with blue satin, to sleep in, and the loveliest little baby carriage. May and I used to take the baby for an airing when we went for a walk.

Another pause, then the child said bravely though with an evident struggle.

"But my dollies are nice too, and a peach basket makes a very com for table bed. Arabella Maud sleeps very sound in it. But how she would enjoy a baby carriage! Now tell me about the picture books."

Then followed a description of my darling's lovely books, which Maggie who was her devoted nurse used to read to her. "And she took such good care of her toys, poor little dear," sighed the girl.

"Why do you call her 'poor, Maggie?' asked Elsie. "Isn't she in heaven where she has everything she wants? I think she's very rich indeed. I expect she has lots of beautiful playthings—made of gold perhaps—and her papa to play with her. It's me that's poor, Maggie. I haven't any papa or mamma and so few toys. The childish voice sounded very pathetic.

"Bless the child, but she's going to have such a Christmas to-morrow," exclaimed her sister cheerily, and I could tell she was hugging and kissing her. "Just you wait and see what's in your stockings. Jennie and I have some splendid secrets." Mrs. Gordon has given me a whole holiday, and such a fine time as we'll have. Arabella Maud shall eat dinner with us.

"I'm afraid her head's too wobbly to sit up straight," laughed Elsie. "Will we have turkey?" she added anxiously.

"Well, not exactly turkey," said Maggie. "Turkeys are very dear this year, but Jennie is going to bake a cake with lots of raisins, and all white with frosting. Oh, we'll have a good time you may be sure."

"Did the little girl have turkey every Christmas?" asked Elsie, who could not be induced to change the subject.

"She had it so often that it wasn't any treat to her," replied Maggie.

There was a long silence, and I began to think they had left the room. I could not help feeling interested in the child and felt a strong desire to see her, if I could without being seen. But presently she spoke again, and there was a world of meaning in her voice.

"How happy the little angel girl's mamma could make other little girls at Christmas time!"

"Now you must start home, dear," said Maggie, who evidently thought it time to drop the subject. "Jennie will be looking for you, and it will soon be dark."

They left the room and I lay there thinking, and for a wonder, not of myself. I knew all about Maggie's family, for she had lived with me several years. There were three orphan sisters, Jennie, the eldest, who took in plain sewing, Maggie, and little Elsie. The father was killed about two years ago by a fall from the building he was working on, and mother died shortly afterwards, leaving the girls nothing but some debts, which they were working hard to pay.

Maggie was not a girl who paraded her troubles and I had never taken any particular interest in them. I paid her well and dismissed her from my mind. I was not one to invite confidences—selfish people never are. When my husband and child were with me, my happiness was all absorbing. Now, my grief occupied all my thoughts. All my sympathy was for myself.

But those words of Elsie haunted me. "How happy the little angel girl's mamma could make other little girls at Christmas time!" It was so true. I tried to go to sleep again but it was useless. I was never wider awake.

So I drew a chair to the window, and mechanically watched the passersby. It had grown dark and the stars were beginning to peep. It was a typical Christmas eve, the air was crisp and bracing. People hurried by, loaded with bundles of all shapes and sizes. Happy mothers with their little ones dancing beside them, and I have no one to buy Christmas gifts for! But suddenly I seemed to hear a childish voice saying, "How happy the little angel girl's mamma could make other little girls at Christmas time. And then sounding so sweet and clear in the frosty air rang the Christmas chimes, saying so plainly, "Peace on earth, good will towards men."

I sprang from my chair and rang for

Maggie. "Maggie," I said, "come with me to the nursery. I want your help."

The nursery was left just as it used to be when May was living, only the toys were carefully put away. I opened a drawer and took out the baby doll and its dainty clothes, and told Maggie to unpack the little satin lined cradle and baby carriage. The tears were running down the faithful girl's cheeks as she obeyed.

"What is it you are doing, Mrs. Gordon?" she asked, hesitatingly. "It is too much for you, especially to-night."

But I didn't cry, strange as it seems I felt happier and more at peace than I had for a long time. I even smiled as I said "I'm going to give Elsie a happy Christmas, Maggie," and I told her of the conversation I had heard that afternoon. Poor Maggie! Her honest face shone with happiness.

"Oh how pleased she will be!" she exclaimed, fervently. "But can you bear to give them up Mrs. Gordon?"

"Please don't say a word, Maggie," I replied, earnestly. "I have thought only of myself for a long time. Now let me make at least one child happy for my angel May's sake. Elsie shall have the merriest Christmas she has ever known."

And she did. I surprised the sisters by walking in to their little home the next afternoon and was amply repaid for my sacrifice, when I saw Elsie's shining eyes as she sat surrounded by her toys. The baby doll was hugged close, in her arms, while the faithful Arabella Maud was lying in state in the cradle carefully covered with the blue satin quilt.

"I wanted her to have a treat too," she shyly explained.

"You have given three people a great deal of pleasure to-day," said Jennie, pressing my hand. "God bless you, Mrs. Gordon."

So I did keep Christmas after all, and I have kept it every year since. The boxes and drawers that held the toys are empty now, but the emptiness has gone from my life. For the sake of "the little angel girl," I am trying to make other children happy, and if I have not found happiness myself I have found peace.

"Surely," through the mouths of babes," God often leads us.

Christmas at the Institution in 1873.

BY AN OLD FETTER.

I desire to relate the interesting events during Christmas at your school in 1873. For the last time in your history Santa Claus in his old ways set up two tapering trees in the chapel and even occupied the new class room, now Mr. Stewart's, where the "Xmas boxes" of all kinds and sizes were, including a cheese box from Avouton for a recipient now a prosperous farmer there owning a model farm and raising a family. As usual, the grand dinner was the first part of the programme, and in the evening the pupils went to the chapel, only to view the tree, and thence to the girls' sitting-room for a party. Two days later, in the afternoon, when they were all seated, Santa Claus, dressed in gray and woolly, even the cap and mitts, with a grille around the waist, entered and standing between the trees in his queer way, started the pleasant proceedings. It was now getting dark and when gas was lighted Santa Claus vanished out of sight and re-appeared no more only as one of the teachers, Mr. Wallbridge. The drawing class, through Mr. Coleman, took their teacher, Mr. Ackermann, by surprise with a gold pen valued at \$2.70, contributed by themselves, and Mr. Ackermann soon afterwards made a sketch of the tree. A few days later, in the evening, a large audience enjoyed the stage in the dining room, erected for the first time in the new eastern quarter, the play was unusually amusing and lively and the most interesting characters were the clown, represented by Mr. Greene, the mischievous monkey by Mr. Wallbridge, and the sly Turk by Harry Mason, a pupil. The play ended with the clown being hanged.

On New Year's day the pupils had another grand dinner kindly supplied by some citizens from the city, mostly of oysters, but most of the pupils were not used to them, so some officers and teachers helped themselves to the feast quite freely as some of them came back from their own quarter for the second plate. Wishing you all "A Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year."—W. K.

Trip to Rainy River Railway.

To the Editor of THE CANADIAN MERE.
FORT WILLIAM, Nov. 18, 1899.

DEAR SIR,—As requested by several of my friends before leaving Toronto I will now write an account of my trip out here and my experience in the construction camps of the new Ontario and Rainy River Railway. I came out here with a party. We took the C. P. R. steamship express at 1.30 p. m., Tuesday, Sept. 19th, for Owen Sound. At Owen Sound we took one of the C. P. R.'s fine steel steamships, the Athabasca. Mr. Hubbard, an old pupil of your school, was employed on this steamship, but unfortunately for me he had just quit the last trip. The steamship left Owen Sound in the evening and I didn't see much till the next morning, when I found we were out at sea on Lake Huron. There was no land in sight, except the Great Manitoulin Island, which was far away from the steamship. After some hours sail we were going through the different passages of water that connect Lake Huron with Lake Superior. The scenery was very beautiful. We passed many other vessels, both American and Canadian. Islands were numerous and there were big forests for miles on the Canadian side. There were quite a lot of cottages and other buildings on the islands and each main land. "Old Glory" was quite numerous on the American side and we would occasionally see the "Union Jack" on the Canadian side. The Athabasca was only flying the C. P. R. colors, but as we were nearing Sault Ste Marie the steamship only stopped at the American Soo! I noticed one of the sailor boys run and get the Union Jack and send it flying on the steamship. Sault Ste Marie is a very nice place and a good place for work. I would like to reside there. We went through the great ship canal at the Soo and I took a good view of the rapids that I had so often heard about. The sailor boys on the Athabasca are a fine lot of fellows.

The next day we were far out at sea on Lake Superior. In the morning there was no land in sight at all, but in the forenoon there was the Canadian main land and some islands in view. It was very cold on Lake Superior and there were big waves. Frequently when we tried to walk straight we would only be staggering and if we were not fortunate enough to get hold of something we would find ourselves running and striking against the wall. Once while looking out of a window in the lower deck at an island we were passing, a big wave struck the steamship, some of the water went through the window and I got quite a little wet. As we were nearing Thunder Bay it was calm again and after several hours sail we reached Port Arthur and Fort William, it being just two days after leaving Toronto. We stopped over the night in Fort William and the following morning took the train for Finmark, 33 miles west of Fort William. Arriving there I found Finmark was simply a railway station with several other buildings. The new railway company had just put up several buildings, among them being its stores department. We were hired on J. R. Turnbull's contract and had to walk about 9 miles to the camp. Travelling is awful rough out there. Some times the waggon's got stuck up to the axles. Turnbull's contract is nearly all along a river. I was staying at camp No. 1. (Headquarters' camp.) There was nothing to see except the woods, hills and river, which was pretty scenery, the trees being dressed in their Autumn leaves made it more beautiful. There was not much game in the woods, but partridges were plentiful. The meals were good and the men were all right; there were no Italians and hardly any foreigners with us. We were nearly all purely fellows from down east,—Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Peterboro and London being largely represented. Several of the fellows from Toronto and Peterboro had seen me before. Among those from Toronto was Mr. W. Hunter, a cousin of Mr. John A. Braithwaite, he and me were getting to be chums, as he was quite a jolly fellow and frequently kept me laughing. He knew the manual alphabet, quite a lot of the other fellows were also familiar with it, and some of them know several other deaf-mutes down east. Our camp was from 70 to 100 strong, and of course I did not feel very lonesome with such a big company. In fact I frequently had some fun, as some of us were as playful as if we were still school boys. We had 35 teams, a harness shop, blacksmith shop and post office and store combined.

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