

The Bells Across the Snow.

O CHRISTMAS, merry Christmas!
Is it really come again,
With its memories and greetings,
With its joy and with its pain?
There's a minor in the carol,
And a shadow in the light,
And a spray of *oress twiing*
With the holly wreath to-night,
And the hush is never broken
By laughter light and low,
As we listen in the starlight
To the bells across the snow.

O Christmas, merry Christmas!
'Tis not so very long
Since other voices blended
In the carol and the song!
If we could but hear them singing
As they are singing now,
If we could but see the shining
Of the crown on each dear brow,
There would be no sigh to smother,
No hidden tear to flow,
As we listen in the starlight
To the bells across the snow.

O Christmas, merry Christmas,—
This it never more can be;
We cannot bring again the days
Of our unshadowed glee.
But Christmas, happy Christmas,
Sweet herald of good-will,
With holy songs of glory
Brings holy gladness still.
For peace and hope may brighten,
And patient love may glow,
As we listen in the starlight
To the bells across the snow.
—Frances Ridley Havergal.

A Christmas Coronation.

IN the ancient cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle, France, there is a tomb of wonderful historic interest. The traveller thinks of it as he enters the solemn edifice, and beholds in the dim distance the chancel oriel burning with mysterious splendours.

"Carlo-Magno," reads the inscription. It is the tomb of an emperor, one of the greatest who ever wore the crown of the Caesars—Charlemagne!

He was king of the Franks, of the peoples of middle Europe and the nations of the north; he conquered the Saxons, and in tremendous struggles defeated all foes, until at last the Alps and the Baltic, the Rhine and the Rhone, were alike parts of his splendid empire. He conquered the Saracens of the south; he added crown to crown, kingdom to kingdom, until Europe lay at his feet.

At the Easter festival in 774, he visited Rome in splendour. A great procession came out to meet him, headed by the Pope. The people hailed him with hallelujahs, the children waved green branches, the clergy in princely vestments sang, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

In the year 800, he was summoned to Rome. The cardinals said: "Let us honour this most powerful Defender of the Faith with a grand Christmas gift—the crown of the Roman world."

The Pope and clergy prepared for Christmas ceremonies of the most joyous and imposing character. It was arranged that though Charlemagne should reach Rome before Christmas, he should have no knowledge of the coronation that awaited him. The

clergy, nobles, and people were to assemble. When he should come into the church to attend mass, and should bow his head to receive the wafer—then he should be suddenly crowned and hailed Emperor of the World.

It was one of the most poetic events of history. The Christmas day came, a beautiful day out of the skies of Italy. The Emperor entered the church in humility, and bowed before the altar. Suddenly, Pope Leo uplifted the crown of the Roman world, and set it upon his head. There arose then a great shout of joy. Clergy and nobles exclaimed in unison: "Long live Charles Augustus, Crowned of God, Emperor of the Romans!"

Christianity possessed Europe now. The Bethlehem Star, shining its eight centuries, lighted all the lands.

Christmas Legends.

THERE is in the home life of the Canadian, especially farmer, at Christmas time, much that brings close to the mind the picture of birth in the lowly manger. Many traditions still live about mysterious occurrences during the Christmas night, and these linger still with all their mellowness of primeval devotion among the homesteads on the verge of the forest or the cottage upon the bleak prairie. The infant's birth took place in a rude manger, among the stalled cattle, when, according to the general belief, cold night-winds blew, and the Divine Babe and his mother were but feebly protected in a chilly manger. One old tradition in particular, tells us at the moment of the child's birth the cattle in the manger fell upon their knees. How often by the lantern's light through the cold night have little ones crept out to the barn where the cattle were in their stalls as the hands of the clock neared the hour of midnight, to see if the cattle were kneeling; for the tradition relates that at the precise moment in each year since the babe was born all dumb animals, in reverence, fall upon their knees. There was another tradition, too, which Shakespeare puts in the mouth of *Marcellus* in "Hamlet," that during the night of the nativity the cock crow from dark to dawn:

"Some says that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
This bird of dawning singeth all night long.
And then they say no spirit dares stir abroad;
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
Nor fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time."

Poor company may be a little better than none. Bad company is certainly a great deal worse. One scabby sheep spoils the flock. One rotten apple will often ruin a dozen which may lie around it; while all the sound ones in the world will not restore one that is decayed. Just so a man who is corrupt will infect many others.

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