

To W. C. C. James

(with the old wishes)

From The Author



hristmas, 1900



HERE'S a minor in the carol, there's a knell in every chime
Floating through the misty daylight this returning Christmas time ;
There's a cloud upon the mountain, there's a sorrow on the sea,
Those who once made Christmas brighter now will come no more to me.

Holly-berries pale your redness, O be dull sweet mistletoe,
In the yule-log's failing embers let us see the long ago ;
Stay the dancers' feet a moment, hush awhile the merry tune ;
Sorrow turns her darken'd pages—reads again each tear-marked rune.

They were beautiful and noble, they were tender, they were gay—
Laughed with us and bore our burden, turned our darkest night to day ;
But when Christmas comes recalling, there's a catching of the breath,
And its vibrant joy is muffled by the chilly hand of Death.

Yet shall Memory wave her sceptre—show them once more as they were,
Love recall each form and feature ; fill each sad and vacant chair,
While we hear the joy-bells ringing, sing the carol glad and free ;
Join once more the feast, well-ordered, joyous, as it used to be.

And, if Memory thus be regnant, shall not Faith's strong angel-hand,
Yet dispel the doubting spectres that around us grimly stand—
Teach us how to grasp the Future, as we hold the precious Past,
And believe that Somewhere, Some Day, we shall clasp our own at last ?

BERNARD McEVoy.