



WHY THE CHIMES RANG

By RAYMOND MACDONALD ALDEN
ILLUSTRATIONS BY MAYO BUNKER



HERE was once, in a far-away country, a wonderful church. It stood on a high hill in the midst of a great city; and every Sunday, as well as on sacred days like Christmas, thousands of people climbed the hill to its great archways, looking like lines of ants all moving in the same direction.

At one corner of the church was a great gray tower, with ivy growing over it as far up as one could see. I say as far as one could see, because the tower was quite great enough to fit the great church, and it rose so far into the sky that it was only in very fair weather that any one claimed to be able to see the top.

Now all the people knew that at the top of the tower was a chime of Christmas bells. They had hung there ever since the church had been built, and were the most beautiful bells in the world. Some thought it was because a great musician had cast them and arranged them in their place; others said it was because of the great height, which reached up where the air was cleanest and purest; however that might be, no one who had ever heard the chimes denied that they were the sweetest in the world. Some described them as sounding like angels far up in the sky; others, as sounding like strange winds singing through the trees.

But the fact was that no one had heard them for years and years. They were Christmas chimes, you see, and were not meant to be played by men or by the custom on Christmas Eve for all the people to bring to the church their offerings to the Christ-child; and when the greatest and best offering was laid on the altar, there used to come sounding through the music of the choir the Christmas chimes far up in the tower. But for many long years they had never been heard. It was said that people had been growing less careful of their gifts for the Christ-child, and that no offering was brought, great enough to deserve the music of the chimes.

Every Christmas Eve the rich people still crowded to the altar, each one trying to bring some better gift than any other, without giving anything that he wanted for himself, and the church was crowded with those who thought that perhaps the wonderful bells might be heard again. But although the service was splendid, and the offerings plenty, only the roar of the wind could be heard, far up in the stone tower.

Now, a number of miles from the city, in a little country village, where nothing could be seen of the great church but glimpses of the tower when the weather was fine, lived a boy named Pedro, and his little brother. They knew very little about the Christmas chimes, but they had heard of the service in the church on Christmas Eve, and had a secret plan, which they had often talked over when by themselves, to go to see the beautiful celebration.

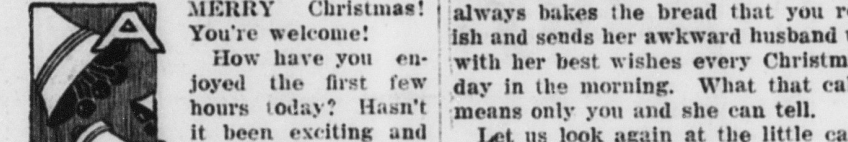
laid on the altar. Rich men and great men marched proudly up to lay down their gifts to the Christ-child. Some brought wonderful jewels, some baskets of gold so heavy that they could scarcely carry them down the aisle. A great writer brought his book, and last of all walked the king of the country, hoping with all the rest to win for himself the chime of the Christmas bells. There went a great murmur through the church, as the people saw the king take from his head the royal crown, all set with precious stones, and lay it gleaming on the altar, as his offering to the holy Child. "Surely," every one said, "we shall hear the bells now, for nothing like this has ever happened before."

But still only the cold wind was heard in the tower, and the people shook their heads; and some of them said, as they had before, that they never really believed the story of the chimes, and doubted if they ever rang at all.

The procession was over, and the choir began the closing hymn. Suddenly the organist stopped playing as though he had been shot, and every one looked at the old minister, who was standing by the altar, holding up his hand for silence. Not a sound could be heard from anyone in the church, but as the people strained their ears to listen, there came softly, but distinctly, swinging through the air, the sound of the chimes in the tower. So far away, and yet so clear the music seemed—so much sweeter were the notes than anything that had been heard before, rising and falling away up there in the sky, that the people in the church sat for a moment as still as though something held each of them by the shoulders. Then they all stood up together and stared straight at the altar, to see what great gift had awakened the long silent bells.

But all that the nearest of them saw was the childish figure of Little Brother, who had crept softly down the aisle when no one was looking, and had laid Pedro's little piece of silver on the altar.

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Behind the Gift

By Barbara Lee

MERRY Christmas! You're welcome! How have you enjoyed the first few hours today? Hasn't it been exciting and interesting? Now that the first little calm has come after the storm, let us settle back to look once again at gifts that are our special fortune to own in the great living room. There's father's gift. Can't you see dear old dad behind every page of your favorite set of books? All call, too, and illustrated by the only artist that appeals to you. What riches lie in the palm of your hand as you look! No one can rob you of these. Every age means the door of a new treasure house. How good of dear father! I wonder how he knew? He must have been listening when you and your chum had that ripping discussion of favorites. And you can't understand how he knew the color of your collection. Ah, well! Trust a father.

Mother's dressing gown. She made it unhelped and probably in the late night hours after the very long day. See how cleverly her fingers have made three yards of cord look like much more. The loops and buttons are handmade; they cost so much less, and you know mother hasn't a bank account of her own. She has not cut down the ration, either. It's just her great, generous heart that has accomplished the seemingly impossible thing. The eyes are not so bright and blue as when she was the happy, laughing girl that dad first loved. But she sees just as far beneath the surface, and she knows how much you long for some things. Ah, what a world of sacrifice and love stands behind these gifts.

Oh, my! Don't smile, but isn't this just like that great, blundering cub of a Bob? He must have paid five or six dollars for this. Poor, misguided, stung brother! Now you can just see him snarling into the "art (save the mark!) needierwork" store. Do you see his airy nonchalance as he casts his eye over the pin cushions arrayed in glistening, satiny lines? How much is this? And this? The latter being the more expensive, was quickly chosen. Oh, what ever are you going to do with it? Bright pink satin, with a suggestive bunch of bright forget-me-nots blooming out from beneath a ruffle of very cheap lace. You'll never forget it. You know—the kind of things you see at fairs. It may be the reason! Perhaps the fair is an institution for helping hopeless pin-cushions along an easy way!

But that's Bob for you! Care free, big hearted, a little rough on the esthetic edges, but ever willing to give you the best. Put back the abomination of satin and sawdust. Don't hurt his feelings, please. Thank him for his thought, his generosity. You can do this without being a hypocrite. Here's something that hurts. Why? Oh, because it has been given to "get ahead" of you. She has money and has bought the most expensive of its kind and has forgotten to remove the price! She really should not have done this, for she isn't one of your inner circle and she doesn't care for you. Money stands back of this. Nothing more than the dollar mark lies beneath the lid. You know it, and a bluish mount

to your cheeks when you think of the few remarks that you heard the giver make about you at Laura's tea. Why do people do these things? Here's a queer one. Lift up the box lid again. It's an old shoe box, but some loving hands have covered it with two paper napkins and—look at the contents! A loaf of the finest Dutch cake you ever tasted. Dear Bridget never forgets you, does she? In her little four-roomed cottage, where she's very happy and very busy, she always bakes the bread that you relish and sends her awkward husband up with her best wishes every Christmas day in the morning. What that cake means only you and she can tell. Let us look again at the little card before you. What did that? A tear falls on the colored church, with its bright roof and another splashes on the snow that is piled with childish prodigality on the roadside. A little boy has drawn that all for you. He calls you "Dear One," and once he told his mother that he felt sure that angels look like you, but she corrected him, as if a child could be stopped in harmless wonderings, and he never again ventured along lines of comparison. Poor little boy! You know what that card means! It means day and days of work. It means the gratitude of a crippled child who can't use a finger without pain. And he has drawn this for you! Oh, my, isn't this funny! That clown of a Jack is up to his tricks again. He has bought a book for 49 cents and has inked it with his foolish hand, adding, "Reduced to \$1.08." And to pile Ossa on Pellon, he has been additionally frank in suggesting that it's "tres bum." That man can always get a smile from you.

There, you've dropped something! Don't lose that. It's a letter. Are you going to read it again? Why, you know every word in it! "Dearest," it says, "I send you my heart, my soul, my life's best thoughts and actions. Will you keep them? Ah, no need to tell you what stands behind the note. You know, don't you? That's why it has been a very happy Christmas!"

The Spiritual Dilemma

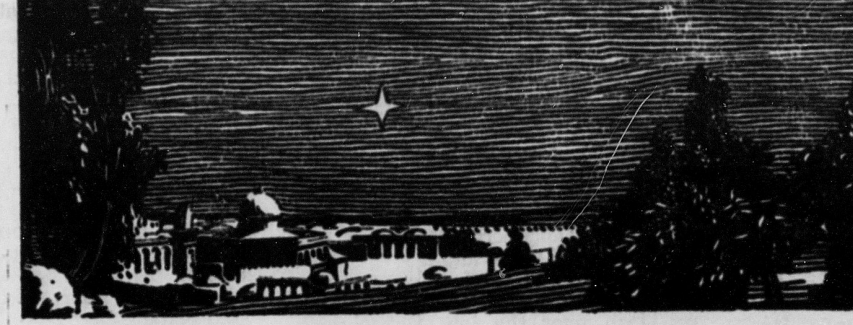
By Wilbur D. Hezbit
Jesus of Nazareth... who went about doing good

Some are an-hungered, some athirst.
Some are borne down with heavy woe,
Some are of sin and shame accursed,
But in the Eve-star's heaven-glow
All are befriended, each has heard
Messages that bid him rejoice.
We are the ones that speak the Word—
Brother, my brother, it is His voice.

We go a-shuddering to the door
Sorrowing over all the want
Giving the gifts brought of our store
Into the hands by pain made gaunt.
Nay, 'tis not ours that find the way
Into the dark and noisome street,
Bringing the cheer of Christmas day—
Brother, my brother, it is His feet.

Child lips to laughter alien-strange
Show us a miracle in this while,
When over them there comes a change—
When for the once they know a smile.
Baubles we bring are jewels fair
Found in the distant wonderlands.—
Think you 'tis we who bring them there?
Brother, my brother, it is His hands.

Pulsing to us through the centuries
Murmurs forever in one deep key,
"As ye have done it to one of these
So have ye done it unto Me."
Give as we can, and gladly, too—
Out of the soul does the impulse start.
What is the throbbing in me and you?
Brother, my brother, it is His heart.



ON EARLY CHRISTMAS DAYS FRIGHTENED BY SANTA CLAUS

Quaint and Interesting Customs That Prevailed When the Church and Festival Were Young.

In the early days of the church, it is said that the bishops used to sing carols on Christmas day among their clergy, and around the sixteenth century the well-known practice observed by children of going around the neighborhood singing Christmas carols beneath the windows of the houses, was commonly observed, usually taking place on Christmas morning. One of the oldest and most beautiful of the Christmas carols that has come down to the present day open with these words:

"God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ, our Savior,
Was born upon this day.
To save us all from Satan's power,
When we were gone astray,
O tidings of comfort and joy!
For Jesus Christ, our Savior,
Was born on Christmas Day."

It is sometimes more appropriate to sing the Christmas carols on Christmas eve than on Christmas day, although they are sung at both times; but in England the choir of the village church used to go around to the principal houses in the parish and sing some of these simple hymns on Christmas eve regularly.

Frequently the singers were accompanied on some instrument and often the picture presented was a pretty one. The figures of the group of singers, only visible in the darkness by the lanterns they carried, and the sweet melody sung and played, made the observance a striking and beautiful one.

Sometimes in England, the carols were also sung in the churches in place of the usual psalms and hymns; although it was more customary for the clerk at the close of the service in a loud voice to wish all the congregation a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

How the Dear Old Saint Carried Consternation Into an African Mission House.

An amusing story of how Santa Claus frightened the black children at a mission station when he first appeared to them a few years ago, is told by the wife of a missionary stationed at Ballunda, Africa. They had celebrated Christmas at Ballunda before, but they never had had Santa Claus, so Mr. Stover, the missionary, dressed up as good Saint Nick.

"He had been padded and powdered and packed until his own mother would not have known him," Mrs. Stover afterward related. "Presently we gave the signal, the door flew open and in walked Santa Claus. But dear me! What consternation! He was greeted with shrieks and groans and cries of 'Let me out! It is the evil one. It is the day of judgment!'"

"The urchins, catching the infection of terror from the older black people, fled to their bedrooms, fell down upon their faces, crept under chairs and tables—anywhere to hide themselves. Poor old Santa Claus never had such a greeting before. As soon as he realized the panic he had caused, he tore off his tall hat and white cotton beard. Then from the bags on his back he began to throw gifts right and left and to tell who he was.

"Reassured once more, everyone was, soon laughing and chatting, munching the great 'red breads' (doughnuts), tasting their fruits or nibbling at the sweets from the familiar little bags.

"It seemed as though everyone tried to talk louder than his neighbor as they examined the costume of Santa Claus, whom they no longer feared. One man said that he thought it was John the Baptist, another that it was Elijah returned. Yet another thought it was Satan himself, and all my sins rose up before me; while a fourth confessed, 'My only thought was to hide myself.'"

CHRISTMAS THE CHILD'S DAY

By Rev. Bradford Leavitt.

Christmas is the child's day in the Christian year, and how this weary and uneasy world needs the child-like mind to save it from itself. What is more subtly fitted to the needs of a worn and dissipated world than the image of all that is alive and fresh and unspoiled? It is the child in men we look for and love—again today the child is the savior that answers a smile with a smile, that responds to the confidence with confidence, ready to take you and me for what we would like to be and thus lifts us nearly to our ideal.

I have admired wit in men and influence and grace and beauty in women and I find also that one disturbs these, grows indifferent to them as he gets older and sadder and wiser, but loves in men and women the little child, longs for some one not to admire nor praise nor be charmed by, but some one to love so that loving shall be peace.

Our Gifts.

As the Magi came bearing gifts, so do we also—gifts that relieve want; gifts that are sweet and fragrant with friendship; gifts that breathe love; gifts that mean service; gifts inspired still by the star which shone over the City of David, nearly two thousand years ago.—Kate Douglas Wiggin.