

**The Message of the Bells**  
A New Year Story  
By ELIZABETH PRICE

Sun clouds scudded gustily across the sky, hiding the peaceful face of the moon, whose radiance touched the edges of her somber veil with a fringe of silver. The great gray tower lifted its head far aloft in the midnight stillness, and the wind moaned around its rough-hewn corners a requiem for the dying year. Within the tower sat the old bell-ringer, waiting for the stroke of 12 from the clock, and, as he waited, his thoughts drifted back to the years long buried in the dimness of the past—the years when his floating white hair had been crisp and black, when his long, slender fingers were strong and supple and struck from the midnight chimes music of entrancing beauty.

Ah! life had been worth the living in those far-off happy days. People had predicted a wonderful future for him, and in spite of the poverty that retarded his progress, and a great ambition possessed him. Obstacles were pushed aside, difficulties overcome, as he worked by day and studied by night, and the bells in the tower spoke marvelous things to the many who listened, and who, listening, praised. Their praise was sweet, but Elspeth's was sweeter, and, when one New Year's eve, he told her of his love and won her promise to be his own, his heart beat with a rapture that thrilled through the chimes that night till listeners wondered and children came back from dreamland to hear.

Oh, happy memory! Oh, long ago! It was on another night like this that Ruprecht was born; and the joy which beamed from the pale young mother's face was reflected in his own, as he left her baby on her bosom and rushed to the bell-tower to make his chimes a paean of praise to the Father who had filled his life with blessing. How they loved him—that baby—their only one—their all! How he and Elspeth had watched each new development—how proudly guided the first tottering step; how carefully repeated the first lisping word! How joyfully they trained and taught him, while the father, too busy in his struggle for their maintenance to realize his great ambition, transferred it uncomplainingly from his own future to that of his son! Nor had their hopes been vain. The boy studied—improving every opportunity with untiring zeal, until at last the great organ in the cathedral



"THE CLOCK ON THE MANTEL WARNED FOR TWELVE, AND THE MUSICIAN TURNED TO THE PIANO AND PLAYED AGAIN SIMPLY AND LOVINGLY PLEYEL'S HYMN."

dral below thundered its glorious music responsive to the touch of the boy's fingers. People thronged to hear. Ruprecht's services were demanded elsewhere—brilliant prospects opened before him, and the inevitable separation drew near.

New Year's Eve! How many anniversaries this shadowy hour held! The boy bade them good-by while Elspeth clung to him and sobbed, and her husband rushed away to tell the chimes his agony as he had poured into them his joy. As he sat waiting even as now, a step came up the stair, and some one entered the belfry chamber, and the voice he loved said tenderly: "Mein Vater, let me play the chimes to-night. I will leave with them a message to comfort you when you are sad—a message for you and the mother, too."

"When I hear it in the far-off land it will be my mother's voice that sings to me, and when you play it, mein Vater, it will say to you, 'Ruprecht loves me.' Then you will pray 'God watch over my boy and keep him safe for me,' and the All-Father will hear."

When Ruprecht struck the massive keys it was the simple old Pleyel's hymn he played, but he lent his beautiful voice to the clangor of the bells and sang his mother's favorite words:

"Children of the Heavenly King  
As ye journey sweetly sing;  
Sing your Saviour's worthy praise  
Glorious in His works and ways."  
A moment later he was gone. The years had been many and long since then, but no tidings ever came, and Elspeth's hair grew white before the look of expectancy in her dear eyes changed to the clammy resignation. He was dead, of course. They knew now that it must be so, though they had not given up hope till they had left the old home and followed their wanderer to the new country. They had heard of the wrecked ship, to be sure, but hope dies hard. Perhaps if they had been patient—had stayed on amid the scenes of his childhood—he might have come back to them; but how could they be patient when the world

was so wide, and half of it lay between them and the land that had called their child. They were only waiting now—he and Elspeth—for the summons which should call them to the happy reunion in a home where there would be no sad good-bys, where music knows no minor, and hearts forget how to ache.

The first stroke of midnight sounded and an instant later the bells pealed forth, while the old man sang with trembling lips and voice that no one heard but God—as he had sung every New Year since that one:

"Children of the Heavenly King  
As ye journey sweetly sing,  
Sing your Saviour's worthy praise  
Glorious in His works and ways."  
Then, as the last reluctant echo died away, he stumbled down the narrow stairs toward home and Elspeth.

Not far from the belltower stood a mansion, where a great throng had assembled to watch the old year out and the new year in. Silken draperies rustled, jewels gleamed, music rippled on the perfumed air, and happy voices rang sweet and high. But every sound was silenced, and bright eyes grew dim in the flood of melody which suddenly poured about the gay throng. They crowded toward the music room, trying to catch a glimpse of the player. Those who were near saw a slender man, with fair curling hair brushed back from a brow as pure as a woman's. The face was pale and the eyes sad, but about the sensitive mouth played an expression of rare sweetness and beauty. Quietly he sat before the grand piano, playing without the slightest effort such masterful music as had lushed the listeners to awe-struck silence.

"Who is he?" was the question passed from one to another when at last the cessation of the music broke the spell.

"He is a friend of father's," their hostess told them. "Father met him abroad some years ago, and by helping him in a search for some missing friends, won his heart. The search was not successful, but that did not seem to lessen Prof. Von Bulow's gratitude, and they have corresponded in a desultory way ever since. Father invited him here for the holidays this year, but he declined the invitation, then this evening suddenly and unexpectedly appeared. These great musicians are always eccentric, you know. I heard him tell father that this is an anniversary he doesn't like to spend alone. Some love story probably. No, he isn't married. He spends his entire time with his wonderful music. That is really all I know about him." With that the interested guests were forced to be content, for the player had vanished from among them as suddenly as he appeared, and soon the gayety resumed its sway.

At 11 o'clock the hostess seated her guests in a circle, saying: "Now we will turn down the lights and tell ghost stories till midnight. Everybody must contribute something. The more gruesome and harrowing the better," she added laughingly. The young people fell in with the spirit of fun, and ghosts walked, hobgoblins shrieked and ghouls moaned, till the more timid begged for mercy.

It was almost 12 o'clock when a new voice suddenly broke into a momentary pause. Everyone looked up to see the musician standing in the door.

"My friends," he said, "my story is not of the spirits of the unseen world—it is of a lad in the far-away Fatherland, who, on a night like this, left home and friends and went out into the wide world, with music as the priestesses who presided at the altar, where burned the fires of his ambition. So brightly did this fire burn that its glow hid the quieter emotions which lingered in the shadow, and father and mother and home were left behind. The youth had not dreamed of the pain of broken ties—but he afterward learned it all.

"Shipwrecked, a weary sickness and deliverance, miscarried letter returned to its writer long afterward—all these came between the lad and his loved ones, and when at last, overcome by the deadly 'heimweh,' he turned toward home, he found it empty—the loved ones gone, while the chimes in the tower which the father had played ever since the lad had lived, responded sadly to the touch of strange, unfriendly hands.

"With breaking heart the lad turned back to the country of his adoption, hoping, against hope, to find the dear ones, who had followed him there during his long silence. The years have passed and the lad is a man, but the father and the mother he has not found, nor does he expect to greet them again until the New Year of Heaven dawns for him, as he believes it has already dawned for them. So, when the midnight comes I play each New Year's Eve as I—as the lad played on that last night long ago—my message to my dear ones."

The clock on the mantel warned for 12, and the musician turned to the piano and played again simply and lovingly Pleyel's hymn, singing as in the long ago the beautiful words his mother loved.

As the last note died away in the quiet room the tower clock began to strike, but was drowned by the music of the chimes. A thrill ran through the hushed circles as they recognized the strain they had just heard, but the musician arose with a mighty cry: "Mein Vater!" and ran out into the night, guided by the music of the bells.

When the old bell ringer shut the door he could not see, for the tears that blinded him, the hurrying figure on the pavement. A moment later he was gathered close to the heart that had yearned for him "through all the space of silence and loneliness, and together, in the opening of the glad New Year, they went out from the shadow of the bell tower, home to Elspeth, whose mother heart came near to bursting, with the joy of a son's home coming.—Minneapolis House-keeper.

**THE NEW YEAR.**

Where I'm waitin' waitin',  
Jessamines are white;  
Dews are drippin', drippin',  
Through the perfumed night;  
An' I'm way off yonder  
Comes the "wheel-te-wheel!"  
Of the happy fieldmark,  
Bubblin' down to me.

An' the sun's a-shinin'  
In each drop o' dew,  
Where I'm waitin', waitin',  
Waitin', here for you;  
Klow you're comin', comin',  
An' I wait for you, dewdrops  
'Mongst midwinter roses  
Drippin' wet with dew;

Know that you will bring me  
Pleasure, but I know  
Ev'ry bubblin' cup o' joy  
Has its dreggs o' woe.  
But I'm waitin' for you  
Where the dewdrops blink,  
Anxious for your comin',  
Dyin' for a drink;

Waitin' for the future  
You are bound to bring;  
Waitin' 'mongst the dewdrops  
Where the field larks sing;  
Waitin' for the goblet,  
Bitter-sweet an' all,  
On my knees I'm waitin',  
Where the fieldlarks call.  
—J. M. Lewis, in Houston Post.

**THE HUNTS' HAPPY DAY**  
A NEW YEAR STORY  
By Ernest Gilmore

It was a New Year's day. There had been a big storm and although the wind had spent its force the snow fell steadily.

"Regular winter weather and no mistake about it," observed Mr. Richard Hunt, as he came in rather noisily, stamping the snow from his boots, "but I like it. So cold and bracing."

Mrs. Hunt, who was sitting near an open fire, laughed.

"I like the house best such a day as this," she said, shivering a little. "I don't believe I'd be willing to face the cold, even for the sake of the bracing."

"I think I heard you say you were going to see old Mrs. Helfer to-day," Mr. Hunt remarked, as he seated himself comfortably. "Have you changed your mind?"

"Yes, I've changed my mind. I did tell you that I was going to see her, but I'll have to wait until some other day. Poor old Mrs. Helfer!"

"Is she sick?"

"Yes."

"And I suppose she's very lonely since her daughter died?"

"Yes."

"I shouldn't wonder if she has a continual struggle to make both ends meet since that disastrous bank failure?"

"I don't believe she does make the ends meet. I feel very sorry for her."

"But not quite sorry enough for you to go and see her as you intended to do to-day?" teasingly.

"Some other day will do as well—will it not?" she questioned, wondering at his persistence.

"Not if she needs you to-day. Come, get on your wraps and I'll go with you."

"Why, Richard Hunt, what's got into you? I thought you never liked to go calling, especially at such places."

"You thought right, my dear," smiling pleasantly, "but can you tell me

"What for?" mockingly. "Why, to bring the load o' coal, of course."

"Oh, my gracious! I believe there's fairies around—I do so!" and after closing the door on the grocer's boy Polly felt inclined to stand on her head by way of celebrating the delightful new state of things.

She left the basket standing in the hall, as it was too heavy for her to attempt to carry, but she could smell the coffee and took that package with her, also two or three more.

"Oh, Miss Helfer," she exclaimed, "another big basket's come, an' it's jes' full o' everything. Here's coffee for you—an'—tea an' sugar. An' to-morrow there's a big load o' coal a-comin'."

"Polly!"

"Yes, mum."

"What does it mean—all that great basket of things you're telling about and the coal coming to-morrow?"

"We had a fine turkey for dinner to-day," said Mr. Hunt, "and I rather think my wife brought you a piece," uncovering the basket. "Yes, sure enough, here it is!"

"Now, Dick," said his wife, "you've made your speech; sit down, please."

He sat down with a sigh, pretending to feel hurt. He looked so comical that Mrs. Helfer's spirits arose so far that she laughed.

"I am greatly obliged to you both for remembering me," she said. "I'm going to confess that I've been longing for some turkey for a week and now here it is."

The trio chatted pleasantly for a little while and then Mr. Hunt arose suddenly.

"I've thought of an errand or two," he said. "You two can have the floor to yourselves until I return. I'll not be gone long." He met the small maid in the hall.

"Polly," he said, "I don't want to pry into Mrs. Helfer's affairs, but I'm really anxious to know if she has everything she needs. She's an old friend, you know, and a friend of my mother's. Does she need anything, Polly?"

"Yes, sir, 'deed she do; but she didn't say so. She ain't no complainer—that's what she ain't. She ain't had no coffee since—since—"

"Go on, Polly, talk fast. Since when?"

"Since her money took wings an' flew. I dunno where it flew to, but that's what someone said—it flew, an' she don't hev butter no more. I wanted to tell the grocer's boy we was out, but Mrs. Helfer she say: 'No, not now, Polly; some other time.'"

"It doesn't seem hardly warm enough in the house, Polly. Do you have plenty of coal?"

"That's what we don't, sir," she said, with decision. "We'm jes' about out. I guess by to-morrow it'll be all gone. Miss Helfer's a most a shakin' with cold sometimes. She had two shawls aroun' her when you rung the bell, but she took 'em off."

Mr. Hunt had heard enough—quite enough.

"Poor, dear old soul!" he said to himself, as he went out on his ministering journey.

He kept his promise—he was not gone long. He put a bunch of bright carnations into the old lady's hand and then he said to his wife smilingly that it was time to "move on."

Polly let them out of the front door. Returning to the room, she found the old lady in a rapture of joy. There were tears in her eyes, but she was smiling. The fragrant, rosy carnations were still in her hand. On a low chair beside her was the basket the Hunts had brought.

"Look, Polly," she cried, in a glee that was like a child's.

And Polly looked and laughed. What she saw was a plate of sliced turkey, dainty biscuit, a print of butter, a mince pie, a frosted plum cake, oranges, grapes, nuts, raisins and candy.

"Oh, my!" cried Polly, "what a fine New Year we do be havin' after all!"

Presently the grocer's boy delivered a heavily filled basket and a message.

"Tell yer missus Buck Bowers sed he'd be here to-morrow mornin' at eight o'clock sure."

"What for?" asked the amazed Polly.

"What for?" mockingly. "Why, to bring the load o' coal, of course."

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"Polly!"

"Yes, mum."

"What does it mean—all that great basket of things you're telling about and the coal coming to-morrow?"

"Polly looked mystified. She stood boring the toe of her old shoe into the rug. Suddenly a light broke over her face.

"I guess it's the Lord, ma'am. You sed the Lord ud provide—I heard you—an' He's done it."

The old lady folded her hands.

**A Happy New Year's Day**  
By BERTHA E. GOODIER

"Now, Elsie Lawrence," the girl severely addressed the woful reflection in the great glass door of the station, "I hope you're not going to cry. Remember, you're much too old for such childishness. It does seem bad that father must go home, and on New Year's day of all days, but you must be brave, as he said, and have just as happy a New Year's day as you can."

It did seem hard to be left all alone. They had come to this wonderful city, Elsie Lawrence and her father, and arrangements had been made for placing the girl in a seminary.

When Elsie Lawrence walked through the beautiful marble-tiled station and stood looking out at the white world that lay before her it seemed that the tears must come, for she was, oh, so lonely.

Outside it was just as crisp and as clear and as sunshiny as a New Year's day should be. The snow sparkled with a million diamond lights, and sifted onto the roofs and the trees a tender white covering that made the city seem a fairy-land. Elsie dreaded to face that biting cold. It was so pleasant and warm inside. But, surely, one could not spend New Year's day in the waiting-room of the station. As she went down the broad avenue toward Miss Morgan's seminary Elsie quite forgot the cold and the loneliness in the interest of watching the people who were hurrying this way and that. It made her a little sad, too, when she thought that everyone in all the great city was having a happy time except herself. Everyone, it seemed, had some place to go; sleighloads of young people were passing, and often they cried out "Happy New Year!" to someone on the street.

Elsie thought of the girls at home, in Fairhaven, and she wondered what they would say if they could see her, standing on the corner of two broad streets, wishing so earnestly that she knew someone on whom she might make a New Year's call. With a clatter and a rush and much sliding of wheels over the shining track, a great yellow car

stopped before her, and was now unloading its human freight. Over its windows it bore the sign, "California Street!"

California street! Elsie's eyes brightened. Impulsively she ran forward and was soon whirling along in the car. She was no longer sad; no longer lonely, for she was going to make a New Year's call on the Washingtons—George, Martha, Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Jackson, Arathusa and Amaryllis. She had been to see them once before. On the day of her arrival Miss Morgan had taken her to the miserable little shanty, and now she was going to see if she might not bring a little sunshine to the six little orphans, whose mother had died but the month before.

She picked her way carefully among the ash heaps and tomato cans that littered Moxey's alley till she stood on the little doorstep and pushed open the rickety door. And what a sight met her eyes! The six little Washingtons sat huddled about a stove in which a few coals gleamed faintly. Martha the eldest, a girl about Elsie's age, crouched on a stool, and in her arms she held Baby Amaryllis, so swathed in a ragged quilt that she looked like a little papoose. Abraham Lincoln crept close to Martha's knee, and was whimpering with the cold. Andrew Jackson and his twin, Arathusa, were huddled together, while George Washington, the man of the family now, was searching the dim corners of the bare room, hoping against hope that some bit of coal might be there.

Martha explained in a dull, hopeless sort of way, all that Elsie had guessed at a glance.

"Mamma, she let us all alone, an' thar ain't nuthin' to eat, an' no money to buy none. I couldn't go to work scrubbin' count o' the awful cold I cotch, an' George Washington, he ain't no bigger'n a minute, an' folks won't give him no sidewalk ter shuveel. I 'clar' ter goodness, Missy, I don't know what 'goin' to come o' we all, 'cause mamma allus said it was better fer to starve ner to beg."

"Well, you needn't beg, Martha, and you're not going to starve on New Year's day. You just bundle those children up, for I'm going to take you all to some place where it is bright and beautiful, and oh, as warm as summer-time!"

In contrast with her present surroundings the great, fine depot seemed



"ELSIE STAYED JUST LONG ENOUGH TO SEE THEM TUCKED AWAY IN LITTLE BEDS."

all this. Martha obeyed wonderingly, and it was a strange little procession that filed out of the darkness of Moxey's alley and a very breathless company that clambered into Jerry Flynn's hack, which Elsie had hailed in the grandest manner possible. Jerry Flynn trembled for the moment at the thought of his bright broadcloth linings, yet there was no need. The little Washingtons were as clean as soap and water would make them. Their little black faces had been scrubbed till they fairly shone, and now that hunger and cold were forgotten in the joy of riding with this beautiful lady who had said that she would take them to some place where it was warm like summer-time, their black eyes were shining, too.

"To the Union depot," Elsie had told Jerry Flynn, and at the station they shortly alighted. "How much?" asked the girl, holding in her hand the crisp new two-dollar bill her father had given her that morning.

"Well, ma'am, my rates is a quarter apiece," began the smiling Jerry.

"A quarter apiece!" Elsie made a rapid mental count. "Oh, I won't have any money left to buy them something to eat!"

"But seeing it's New Year's," went on the hackman, "give me half a dollar, ma'am, an' we'll call it square," and Jerry Flynn was rewarded by the smile in Elsie's eyes.

It was as warm as summer-time, and oh, so beautiful. At first the little guests could only sit in a solemn little row, staring wide-eyed at the marble pillars and glittering chandeliers. They made the quaintest picture, and every one stared and then smiled; and after awhile the Washingtons began to smile, too, and to feel less strange and to nudge one another and whisper together in the jolliest way. Elsie, meanwhile, was holding earnest conversation with the proprietor of the lunch counter.

"But you see," she said, "I have only a dollar and a half, and I must keep something to get back with. Six cups of coffee at ten cents would be 60 cents, and six pieces of pie at ten cents—oh, how can I ever buy enough for those poor children!"

"Beg pardon, ma'am, but I didn't know you was buyin' for that orphan asylum over there. Possibly I could find enough for you for a dollar. How's that? I'll take the contract of fillin' them up for a dollar."

And Elsie was glad to accept this really generous offer. They had pie and coffee and sandwiches and pork and beans. Some of the articles, of course, were not as salable as they might have been a few days before, but the Washingtons did not mind this in the least, but just ate and ate, pausing every now and then to smile tenderly at Elsie.

When at last no one would have another piece of pie or another orange, the children rolled up on the soft cushions and went to sleep for all the world like cozy little kittens. Elsie took the queer bundle from Martha's tired arms and fixed her own coat against the bench that the girl might rest better. Then she sat for a long time looking about her at her charges, and thinking what a funny way it was to spend New Year's day. The station policeman, who had had his eye on them for a long time, came forward now. "Were you waitin' for a train, ma'am?" he asked, touching his cap.

"No—oh, no, thank you," said Elsie, looking sweetly up at him.

His words put an anxious thought into the girl's mind. What were they waiting for, after all? Where could they go now? She listened to the rising wind and saw the sleet driven against the window. Oh, how could they face the storm—poor Martha Washington and these little ones? What could they do but wait? And for whom?—unless it be the Father of the fatherless? It was a comfortable thought, and when, after another space of anxious watching, the policeman again came forward and said kindly, "Won't you tell me who you're waiting for?" Elsie smiled through the tears that would come, and answered solemnly, "We're waiting for the Father of the fatherless."

He was a very kind-hearted policeman, and perhaps was remembering a little blue-eyed girl of his own as he listened to the simple story, for he drew one rough hand across his eyes and said: "Well, little girl, I guess you don't need to worry about them kids no longer, for I'll just call up the patrol and take them over to the police station in no time, and in the morning we'll see if we can't get them into the colored orphan's home. I guess the Father of the fatherless was lookin' out for them all the time, so you needn't worry no more."

**Song for the New Year.**

A song for the New Year—its hopes and its fears,  
And never a song that is saddened by tears;  
A song that shall ring and shall sing to the years—  
A song of a brighter to-morrow!

A song for the New Year—forgetting the old  
Whose story in sunshine and shadow was told;  
A song of the joys that Love's dear arms shall hold—  
A song of brighter to-morrow.

A song of a green world and bluest of skies,  
A song of a sun that in splendor shall rise;  
The joy's in Love's heart, and the light's in Love's eyes,  
And the world sees a brighter to-morrow!  
—F. I. Stanton, in Atlanta Constitution.

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