

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

Outworn and weary, old and gray,
The helpless world in darkness lay;
And sins and sorrows, woe and crime,
Shrouded life with a cheerless pall.
With death the hopeless end of all,
The prophet and the sage were dumb,
Seeing no hope nor comfort come.

But there shone a light in the East,
And the night was done;
And all were bid to the feast
Of hope begun,
When was born the victim and the priest,
In Mary's Son,
Then the seed of the ancient Writ
To harvest came:
The hand of a Child unkut
The web of shame,
An the fires of faith were lit
With his love-orbed name.

Through the quivering gulfs of tears
Still darkling flow;
Though winds of the storm-vexed years
Waft men to woe;
To the dim-seen mark the helmsman steers
By the beacon's glow.

Dear Child, whose heaven-lit eyes
Scan all man's ill!
With the hope that never dies
Prop our poor will,
And let thy sacrifice
Our spirits fill!

Though outcast at the rich man's gate,
The beggar Lazarus weep and wait;
Though want and woe and cruel things,
And many bitter sufferings
Deface this day of sacred mirth,
No hope that springs not from thy birth
May put the evil shapes to flight,
Cut down the wrong and build the right.

Though chill unfaith, though mists of doubt
May gird our brothers round about,
Let no foot fail, let no soul stray
Forever from the holy way,
Father, that wast e'er time began,
And brother of thy brother, man!

GRANDMOTHER'S STORY.

A CHRISTMAS PARTY.

"Tell us a funny story this time,"
Grandmother leaned back in her rocking-
chair, looked into the faces of three or four
grandchildren, who were sitting near her, and
laughed outright. Then she put one soft,
wrinkled white hand up over her eyes, rested
her elbow on the arm of her chair, and laughed
again.

"Oh! you have thought of one, I'm sure!"

"Yes."

Her grandchildren, with their fathers and
mothers, always spent Christmas at her home,
and a story from her lips was usually a part
of the programme for Christmas eve. And
this was the story that was told in answer to
their request, a year ago this Christmas.

"What I think I will tell you about took
place about fifty-five years ago, when I was
fourteen years old. I cannot say that I then
saw anything funny in it. And if I didn't
think it funny, I am sure the boy did not who
took his part in the events of the evening.

"As I have said, I was fifteen years old, and
Ebenezer Dill, who was a neighbor and ac-
quaintance, was seventeen. We both went to
the same school—a district school—and things
in and around it were, primitive enough.
We lived about two miles from the school-
house, and the Dill's farm joined my father's.
I was the oldest child in our family. Ebene-
zer was the oldest of the Dill's children,
and he and I were the only ones in either fam-
ily who went to school that first winter.

"We often walked to and from school to-
gether. He was an awkward, bashful boy with
a red head, who always seemed to be growing
out of his clothes before they were half worn
out, so that his pantaloons and the sleeves of
his coat were generally several inches too
short for him.

"I am sure, too, that I was awkward and
bashful, and even at my best I never was a
beauty, so possibly it would be about six-of-
one and half-a-dozen of the other, if I should
attempt to give a portrait of either of us.

"We had a lively, pleasant teacher that
winter. Some of the folks said he was too
full of fun for a school teacher, and that he
should have more dignity. But in those days,
as well as to-day, a teacher would be found
fault with if he were made to order. This
teacher's name was Hooper, and he prepared
a tree, and had it placed in the school-house
the day before Christmas. Some of the farmers
grumbled about that, and said it took our
minds off our book, and Mr. Hooper's mind
from his duties as teacher, and it wasn't right.
Nevertheless, we had the tree.

"Two or three days before Christmas, when
I opened my spelling-book, I found, between
the leaves, a little note scribbled in red ink on
a piece of paper torn from a copy-book. It
read like this:

"MISS PRISCILLA—Esteemed miss: I take my
pen in hand to wish you a merry Christmas
and to send you my best wishes, and to ask the
pleasure of your society to the tree to be held
here on Friday night. Hoping you will send
me a writing that you will go with me, and
that I may get it soon. I am your true friend
and admirer,

"EBENEZER B. DILL.

"P. S. My pen is bad, my ink is pale,
My love for you shall never fail.

"E. B. DILL.

"Round is the ring that has no end,
So is my love for you, my friend."

"EBENEZER."

"At the top of the page Ebenezer had drawn
with blue and red ink a dove that looked like a
gander, sitting on a tree that was not half as
big as the bird. This is all as clear in my
memory as though it had taken place yesterday.

"Although I walked home with Ebenezer that
night, I did not say anything about the note,
but the next day I slipped this into his arith-
metic:

"MISTER EBENEZER B. DILL—Kind sir:
Herein find my acceptance of your company on
Friday night, as my folks are not coming, and
I have no one else to come with, and I am
much obliged for your wanting me to, and I
will be ready at seven o'clock.

"MISS PRISCILLA H. FINK.

"P. S. I don't know any poetry, or I would
put some in."

"P. S. Our dog bit a man bad yesterday,
so be careful, for he isn't chained nights."

"PRISCILLA."

"By seven o'clock on the next Friday evening
I was ready to start for the school-house.
My father was always full of fun, and was an
awful tease. Of course, he made the most of
this opportunity, and when Ebenezer knocked
at the door he opened it and said,—

"Come in, Ebenezer! Come right in! Go-
ing to act as a bear to-night? Hey? Purty
dark night for you to be out alone, ain't it?
They say a man see a bear in the woods to-
day. Better look out. Jake Simpson says he
saw tracks of some monstrous big varmint in
the frost this morning. Don't you let it eat up
my Prissy."

"Ebenezer answered quite promptly for him.
"I'll have to eat me first, sir."

"My mother, who enjoyed any innocent
pleasantries, laughed, and asked,—

"Has your mother put anything on the
tree for you?"

"I don't know," replied Eb.

"Well, I sent over a doll for Prissy and one
for you, too, and a frosted cookie for each of
you. Mind that you don't drop them if that
wild creature out in the woods gets after you."

"Ebenezer blushed and moved nervously in
his chair; but finally mustered up courage to
say,—

"Well, I guess we'd better go, Miss Fink."
"That 'Miss Fink' amused father and mother
very much, and we could hear them laughing
after we got out into the road.

"Ebenezer was wonderfully fixed up. The
hair oil was so thick on his head that it could
be seen in white spots where it had hardened.
Then he had on a white collar over his flannel
shirt, and a green ribbon neck-tie run through
a coral ring. His blue gingham handkerchief
was odorously with cinnamon drops, and to
crown the whole he had on his father's over-
coat.

"I think we had gone half way to the school-
house before either of us could think of a
word to say. Then Ebenezer pulled his hand
out of his pocket, and held it out toward me,
saying only,—

"Here."

"He had given me a handful of candy hearts.

"There's readin' on 'em," he continued,
after we had gone another half mile.

"Is they?" I answered hesitatingly.

"Yes, and its real purty, some of it."

"After that Ebenezer became less constrained
and more confidential.

"I know something," he whispered.

"Of course I was very much amazed at that,
and responded, 'Do you?'

"Yes, sir," exclaimed Ebenezer emphati-
cally.

"What is it?"

"Oh, nothing! Only there's going to be
something on the tree for somebody."

"Of course I inferred that he meant me,
but I didn't think it would be quite proper for
me to say so.

"After a pause the young man exclaimed
impulsively:

"You 'spect to get anything off the tree?"

"No."

"Well, you will, and I could tell who put it
on that tree for you, if I had a mind to!"

"Could you?"

"Yaas. And it cost seventy-five cents."

"Then there was silence. Time was given
me to digest the important fact, and then he
continued:

"I had seventy-five cents jest 'fore Christ-
mas, but I ain't got it now, and I don't care if
I ain't."

"Then I knew, of course, that he wished
me to know that he had put seventy-five cents
worth of something on the tree for me, and it
seemed to me that the proper thing for me to
do would be to place something on the tree
for him. I was in a dilemma; but I remem-
bered that I had in my pocket a pair of red
and green suspenders with brass buckles, that
had made to put on the tree for my brother
Cyrus, and now I concluded that the least I
could do, in return for his generosity to me,
was to put them on for Ebenezer. And acting
on this conclusion, I placed them on the tree.

"The tree was beautiful, to our unaccus-
tomed eyes, and the old school-house was full
of people. Mr. Hooper, as each present was
taken from the tree, read the name of the boy
or girl to whom it was given. When my name
was called, I marched up, and what do you
think that awkward boy had put there for me?
Why, a big china doll's head and a candy heart
as big as a pie, with 'Be True to the Giver' on
it in large gilt letters.

"My brother Cyrus knew that I had made
the suspenders for him, and kept pointing at
them as they dangled from the tree, saying to
the boys around him,—

"Them's my s'penders! Them red and
green galluses is going to be for me."

"You can imagine, therefore, what followed,
when they were called off for Mister Ebenezer
B. Dill." Cyrus fairly screeched in his indig-
nation, and exclaimed,—

"Them galluses aint for Eb Dill. They're
mine. My sister Prissy made 'em, an' she
didn't make 'em for no Eb Dill, neither."

"Of course there was a roar of laughter all
over the school-room, and Cyrus began to cry.
But Ebenezer kept the suspenders, and I ac-
tually had to give Cyrus a bite from my candy
heart to keep him quiet.

"Well, when the presents had all been given,
Eb and I left for home. He talked fast
enough then, but about nothing but that doll's
head and the heart, and how splendid they
were.

"We had not gone very far when old Uncle
Simon Sharpe overtook us. He was a singular
old man, full of humor. I hardly think that
Longfellow himself could make rhyme easier
than Uncle Simon. His head was full of it,
and they did say that he could say his prayers
in poetry. He was in the best of spirits, and
when he saw us, held his lantern up in our
faces, and exclaimed,—

"Is this you, Priscilla Fink? Well, well,—

"It may in truth be said by some,
That Ebenezer teased you hum;
I blame you not to take a spark
To light you home when it is dark."

"Then he gave Ebenezer a poke with his
cane, and off he went ahead of us.

"We were nearly home, and were crossing
our pasture, when I said, 'I wonder if there
really are any bears in the woods.' For there
were occasionally bears in those days, in the
vicinity of country in which we lived, and
came in a great while a panther was killed.

"Well, you're all right if there are bears,"
replied Eb, quite bravely. But just then
something big and black jumped up from
under an old apple tree that stood a little
distance at our right. It stood still for a mo-
ment, but when we moved it jumped back.

"There's a bear!" exclaimed Ebenezer,
and I could feel his arm tremble.

"The animal made another jump, and Eb-
enezer made a spring also, and actually got
round the other side of me, so I was between
him and the animal.

"I started and ran past the tree as fast as
my feet would carry me toward home, leaving
Ebenezer screeching behind. I was sure that
the bear was eating him up.

"Reaching home, I burst into the house
screaming, 'O father, father! Ebenezer! A
bear! Under the old apple-tree in the pasture
lot!' and down I fell in a dead faint, with the
candy heart and the doll's head broken to pieces
under me.

"Fat er and my older brothers took lan-
terns and guns, and started for the elm-tree as
fast as they could run, while mother put me
to bed."

"Don't tell us that poor Ebenezer was killed,
even if he was a coward," cried one of grand-
ma's breathless listeners.

"Goodness, no!" laughed the old lady.
"When father and the boys got within twenty
yards or so of the tree all was still, but the
form of the animal could be dimly seen."

"You hold the lantern," said father, to brother
Henry, "and I'll shoot the beast. But I'm
fraid it's all up with poor Eb."

"But just as father was taking aim, he
heard a voice 'Don't shoot, Mr. Fink. It ain't
no bear. Please get me loose.'"

"Father and the boys at once ran to the
tree, and the next moment they were laughing
so boisterously that mother heard them at the
house."

"You see, we had a big, black calf about
nine months old that had been kept in the
stable lot, and that day father had moved a
part of the fence so as to enlarge the lot. To
keep the animal from running away, the
hired man had taken a long rope and then
tied up the animal to the tree out in the past-
ure."

"When Eb and I came along the calf jumped
up as badly scared as we, and then I ran,
and Eb in his fright thought that the safest
place for him was to climb the tree. As he
was rushing for it, the calf started, tore round
it in a circle, and before the frightened boy
could get out of the way, that calf had wound
a coil of rope around him, and it kept on run-
ning round and round until it had bound
poor Ebenezer to the tree in three or four
coils of rope.

"While he was trying to get out of the coils
that were about him, father and the boys were
on the ground, and before they were through

laughing, Eb had contrived to extricate him-
self.

"He said that when he felt the rope wind-
ing around him he thought it was a boa con-
strictor, and he was so pale that when the lan-
tern was held up to his face, the freckles showed
like a spots on a turkey's egg."

"And the boy was so angry because they
laughed at him that he lay down on the
ground and fairly bellowed, and I don't know
but he was there when Santa Claus went his
rounds that night. At any rate, after that I
was never a favorite of his. The adventure
and the laughter of the boys at his cowardice
effectually cured his love-making."

On the Old Plantation.

"Bang, snap, fizz, bang!" When first I
opened my eyes in the gray December dawn, I
almost believed it to be Fourth of July, for
surely it could be naught but firecrackers that
were thus noisily saluting my ears. But as the
cobwebs of sleep passed from my brain, I
quickly recalled that this was my first Christ-
mas in the "Sunny South," and I had been
told that in some places it was a custom of the
light-hearted Africans to welcome the day with
the gay and festive Chinese crackers.

With considerable curiosity, then, I sprang
from my couch and hurried to the window, to
gaze down upon the courtyard below, where
dozens of black and shining little "pikannin-
ies" were squabbling and turning over each
other in a perfect frenzy of delight and occa-
sionally being brought to order by a well-
aimed cuff from some fat, good-natured "Mam-
mie," who, however, seemed to enjoy the small
fireworks as much as the youngest chocolate-
shaver there. Suddenly the master ap-
peared, bowing and smiling, upon the broad
veranda, when in an instant arose such a
chorus of "Cris'mus gif, massa, Cris'mus gif"
as speedily brought a shower of small
coins scattering among the crowd. Then what
a frantic scrambling ensued, while, for two
hours later, the mistress of the household had
her hands full, giving out extra rations of but-
ter, sugar, tea and tobacco, to say nothing of
gay bandannas, aprons, ribbons, and large
gilt pins and earrings for the young and pretty
girls.

The whole day, then, was one of feasting
and jollification, the men, boys and dogs in-
dulging in that rarest of sports to the true
African, an exciting "possum hunt;" while
in the evening the negro quarter was a scene
of boisterous revelry, as old and young "tripped
the light fantastic toe" to the squeaky strains
of Uncle Jake's antique fiddle. Not till the
night was far spent did the fun subside, and
closed with a "cake walk," when, in stiff and
silent pairs, the dainty belles and beaux paraded
two by two, and in the end Maum Chloe
proudly carried off the cake; for, in negro
vernacular, "she never bat an eyelid, and wore
a death-like look on her face," two peculiar-
ities which the company evidently considered
the height of grace and beauty. Certainly she
was a "sight for gods or men," as with shoul-
ders back, and arms akimbo, she marched with
the air of a queen, and vainly conscious of her
holiday finery, a low-necked gown, gorgeous
bandanna, and glittering beads and earrings,
which semi-barbaric splendor well accorded
with her dark skin, like polished ebony. And
as the midnight bells proclaimed that another
Christmas was past and gone, the air resounded
with hearty cheers, from many lusty throats,
for "Ole massa, ole missus, and the ole plan-
tation!"

SHE WOULDN'T KISS KRIS.

Last night I dreamed Old Christmas
Came knocking at the door;
I knew him by his long, white beard,
And by the furs he wore,

And by his coat with pockets
Stuffed full as they could hold;
He pinched my cheeks, he kissed me hair
His lips were very cold!

He said, "I'm Grandpa Christmas
To all the girls and boys;"
But, oh! he fairly shook the house—
His voice made such a noise!

Perhaps I hurt his feelings—
I wouldn't kiss him back;
He slipped away, I can't tell how,
He never left a track.

To-night he's really coming
With budget and with pack;
I don't see how I could do so—
I wish I'd kissed him back!

—Edith M. Thomas.

Those Christmas Bells.

Christmas bells ring out the peals of nations.
We want our standards less of the lion and
eagle, and more of the lamb and dove. Let
all the cannon be dismantled and the war
horses change their gorgeous caparisons for
plough harness. Let us have fewer bullets
and more bread. Life is too precious to dash
it out against the brick casements. The first
"Peace Society" was born in the clouds, and
its resolution was passed unanimously by an-
gelic voices, "Peace on earth, good will to
men."

Christmas bells ring in family reunions!
The rail-trains crowded with children coming
home. The poultry, fed as never since they
were born, stand wondering all of the farmer's
generosity. The markets are full of massed
barnyards. The great table will be spread and
crowded with two or three or four generations.

Plant the fork astride the breastbone, and with
skilful twirl, that we could never learn, give
to all the hungry lookers-on a specimen of
holiday anatomy. Florence is disposed to
soar, give her the wing. The boy is fond of
music, give him the drumstick. The minister
is dining with you, give him the parson's nose.

May the joy reach from grandfather, who is
so dreadfully old that he can hardly find the
way to his plate, down to the baby in the high
chair, who, with one smart pull of the table-
cloth, upsets the gravy into the cranberry.
Send from your table a liberal portion to the
table of the poor, some of the white meat as
well as the dark, not confining your generosity
to gizzards and scraps. Do not, as in some
families, keep a plate and chair for those who
are dead and gone. Your holiday feast would
be but poor fare for them; they are at a better
banquet in the skies.

Let the whole land be full of chime and
carol. Let bells, silver and brazen, take their
sweetest voice, and all the towers of Christen-
dom rain music.—*Trinlage.*

THE BELLS.

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
The old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

Christmas in Poland.

In Poland, when the first star of Christmas
eve appears the bell is rung to gather every-
one in the dining room. The family and the
servants mingle together. All are in holi-
day attire—the picturesque garb of the prov-
inces—the masters in their kotoons and jupans
—the servants in livery and peasant attire.

The heads of the household go round to all
the assemblages and break a wafer with them.
The wafers have been blessed for the occasion.
Wishes of "Merry Christmas," and the evening
is spent in stories of Christmas and in illus-
trating the scenes connected with the cruci-
fixion.

Midnight strikes. All leave the house,
wrapped in furs; they get into sleighs and start
for church. The pastoral mass is celebrated
with the finest music that the community can
afford. Good nights are exchanged, then the
return home and to bed.

UNDER THE MISTLETOE.

Under the mistletoe, pearly and green,
Meet the kilt lips of the young and old;
Under the mistle or hearts may be seen
Glowing as though they had never been cold:
Under the mistletoe peace and good will
Mingle the spirits that long have been twain;
Leaves of the olive branch twined with it still,
While breathings of hope fill the loud carol
strain.
Yet why should this holy and festive mirth
In the reign of old Christmastide only be
found?
Hang up love's mistletoe over the earth
And let us kiss under it all the year round.

LITTLE DAN'L.

A STORY OF LIFE AMONG THE POOL.

"Dan! Dan!"
Dan! did not stop, but Phil Reynolds, the
old shoemaker, did. What was the use of call-
ing after a boy who all you could see of him
was his flying heels and his yellow hair blown
out by the wind. Old Phil scratched his head.
He had grown fond of the boy in the three
months they had lived in the same house.
People in tenement houses have time to grow
fond of each other, just as they have to hate.
Phil went back to his cobbling for fortu-
nately he had work, though more than one in
that big teeming household had not.

What was this?
There was a sudden invasion of the court by
a crowd of men and boys, some women and
girls, too, and in the midst stood poor little
Dan! Dan! grasped fast in the clutches of a police-
man. In an instant every window but one was
thrown open and filled with a motley crowd;
not that the sight of a policeman was rare in
Cherry Alley, but any excitement was a god-
send to those unfortunate victims of an untow-
ard destiny.

Phil put down his work and was soon talking
to the policeman and trying to comfort little
Dan! for the child was sobbing and trem-
bling.

"I tell you there's no mistake," said the po-
liceman, gruffly; "the boy was trying to cut
down a turkey—"

"The size of him!" interpolated the chorus
around them, while some gamins executed a
sort of waltz on the outskirts of the crowd
with an accompaniment of "Ya! Ya!" as if in
admiring encouragement of one who, though
small, was thus aspiring.

"Jackson's a good man," continued the
policeman, quelling the unseemly interruption
with a look; "else he'd haul this young one
up. He saw he was a new hand, 'most a
baby."

"If he let him off, what are you doing with
him?" said Phil, attempting to draw the little
fellow to him.

The policeman put one finger to his nose
and winked at his questioner, then raising his
voice so all might hear—"Mr. Jackson let him
off this time, 'cos it was his first offence, but
let him catch him again or any of you (the po-
liceman raised his club and shook it at the de-
parting crowd) and he'll have you all up."

Then he turned to Phil. "Whose brat is this,
anyhow? He oughtn't to be in the streets
along with them vermin—they'll corrupt good
manners, sure. You take him—you seem to
know him—keep watch over him. Mr. Jack-
son says his mother's sick and told me to take
him home. I've done my part; you do yours."

"And with a nod the burly officer of the law
strutted off. He knew old Phil, and had done
his duty in frightening the boy. He felt a
throb of self-satisfaction as he reflected he
might have been more severe.

Cherry alley was quiet again. Some of
them shrugged their shoulders as they saw
old Phil lead the boy to his room. "He is just
fool enough to take on about that child," one
said. "And old mother Dowd—she is attending
to the sick woman now—she is another of the
same sort."

And it was fortunate she was there, as the
noise of the excitement roused poor little Dan-
iel's mother.

"What is the matter?" she asked in a whis-
per.

"Just those boys making too much noise,
as usual, they're going now." Mother Dowd
spoke with the assurance of one who felt she
might say anything; poor Mrs. Lansdon could
not help herself.

"Where is—Daniel?" was the next question.
"Is he there?"

"He's gone with old Phil," said her volun-
tary nurse ruefully, and she glanced
again at the window, longing to know
what the trouble had been.

But she had to curb her curiosity, for Mrs.
Lansdon had relapsed into an almost uncon-
scious condition and was murmuring confused
words about husband and children, now, alas!
all gone but Daniel, and him she was leaving.
Her husband had been a seafaring man, a
captain, and Mother Dowd's a sailor, so there
was sympathy between the two women, and
the latter had done all she could; but how
little that was!

"Yes; Mr. Darrow is at home," answered the
butler.

"Show the gentleman in here," was Mr.
Darrow's orders, and with many a grimace
behind his back, the butler showed the "gentle-
man" into the dining room, where Mr.
Reginald Darrow sat alone over his wine.

"Ah! Good evening, Reynolds. Have a
glass of wine? No? Well, then, sit down
and tell me what success you had this after-
noon."

Reynolds sat down on the edge of one of the
leather-covered chairs.—