

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR

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"Oh! joyously the Christmas bells are ringing, far and near; to countless hearts glad memories up-bringing, and good cheer."—HARRIET NEWELL SWANWICK.

THE OLD FOLKS' CHRISTMAS.

BY T. C. HARBAUGH.

In the soft and holy twilight of this life we sit today
Beneath the bells of Christmas time, a trifle old and gray;
Yes, side by side, your hand in mine, good wife, we sit and see
Beyond the portals of the past full many a Christmas tree.

The joy that fills our wedded hearts transfigures us today
As we with resignation tread the gentle Master's way;
Aye, hand in hand we journey to the brightest of all climes,
While ring for all in every land the blessed Christmas chimes.

The firelight throws its ruddy glow upon your cherished face,
And Love, the ardent limner, leads to it a saintly grace:
While from the village, nestling like a bird in yonder glen,
The bells ring out the melody of "Peace! good will to men!"

He has guided us, the Master, thro' darkness and the storm,
'Tis Trust that lifteth up the heart, 'tis Love that keeps it warm;
Beyond the Christmas threshold, not so very far away,
Lies the sunburst of His promise of the Everlasting Day.

I oft recall that Christmas in the golden long ago,
When sweetly rang the mirthful bells across the fleecy snow,
And side by side we stood within the chapel far away,
And blushing I kissed my bride that peaceful Christmas day.

Each Christmas we renew the love which never groweth old,
The bells ring out the story first by seraph voices told
When Mary bent above her babe amid the fragrant hay,
And all the choirs of Heaven sang for earth's first Christmas day.



"SIDE BY SIDE, YOUR HAND IN MINE, GOOD WIFE."

We looked ahead to happy times; I never shall forget
The homeward ride behind the bells, I think I see you yet,
As in the sleigh beside me, wife, you nestle good and warm,
And all the neighbors welcomed you that morning to the farm.

I long to see the children with their laughter, song and glee,
They cannot come a whit too soon nor stay too long for me;
For Christmas cannot bring to me from all its gifts of bliss
A sweeter, better present than a little prattler's kiss.

It seems to me that Heaven smiled upon that year, dear,
The little cottage on the farm sweet children came to cheer;
And one by one they slipped away in other scenes to roam,
But every Christmas back they came to visit us at home.

A little while and you and I will from the old house go,
To slumber where the roses bloom, where falls the fleecy snow;
For angel fingers touch the gates of lifetime's hallowed even,
And we may spend together, wife, next Christmas Day in Heaven.

They'll come today, as oft of old, to sit around the hearth
And make the old folks happy with their love and stainless mirth,
And little tots will storm the house with laugh and childish glee,
And cuddle down in grandma's lap and sit on grandpa's knee.

But you and I are ready, wife; we have naught to fear,
And so we'll make this Christmas a time of right good cheer;
Paternal love and gratitude shall throw a radiant charm
Around each loved one who, today, visits the dear old farm.
—Ohio Farmer.

