

# WHY THE CHIMES RANG

By Raymond M. Alden

HERE was once in a far away country, where few people have ever traveled, a wonderful church. It stood on a high hill in the midst of a great city, and every Sunday, and on sacred days like Christmas, thousands of people climbed the hill to the church.

When you came to the building itself you found stone columns and dark passageways and a grand entrance leading to the main room of the church. This room was so long that one standing at the doorway could scarcely see the other end, where the choir and the minister sat near the marble altar. At the farthest corner was the organ, which was so loud that when it began to play the people far off could hear it.

The strangest thing about the whole building was the wonderful chime of bells. There stood at one corner of the church, a gray stone tower with ivy growing over it as far as the eye could see. It was so high that it was only in very fair weather that anyone claimed to see the top. Up and up climbed the stones, and since the men who built the church had been dead for many hundreds of years, everyone had forgotten how high the tower was supposed to be.

Now, all the wise people knew that at the top of the tower was a chime of Christmas bells. They had hung there ever since the church was finished 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, and others said it was because of the great height of the tower, reaching up to where the air was clear and pure; however this may be, no one who had heard the chimes denied that they were the sweetest in the world. Some



Laid His Crown on the Altar.

described them like angels sounding far up in the sky.

But the fact was that no one had heard them ring for years and years. There was an old man living not far from the church who said that his mother had spoken of hearing them when she was a little girl, and he was the only one who could say as much as that. They were Christmas chimes, you remember, and were not meant to be played by men or on common occasions.

On Christmas eve all of the people in the city brought their offerings to the church to offer to the Christ child, and when the greatest and best offering was laid on the altar, there would come sounding through the music of the choir the voices of the Christmas chimes far up in the tower. Some said the wind rang them and others that they were so high angels would set them swinging. But for many long years, as was said before, they had never been heard. The minister said that people had been growing less careful of their gifts for the Christ child, or gave them rather to make a display for their own honor than for love of him, so that no offering was brought good enough to deserve the music of the chimes. Still, every Christmas eve, the rich people of the city crowded to the altar, each one trying to give some better gift than anyone else, and the church was filled with those who thought that perhaps the wonderful bells would ring again. But, although the music was sweet and the offerings were plenty, only the roar of the wind could be heard far up in the old stone tower.

Now, a number of miles from the

city, in a little village where could be seen of the great church, save glimpses of the tower when the weather was fine, lived a boy named Pedro, and his little brother. They knew very little about the chimes, they had heard of them in the church on Christmas eve and had a secret plan that they had often talked over when by themselves for going to the beautiful celebration.

"Nobody can guess, Little Brother," Pedro would say, "all the fine things there are to see and hear in the church, and I have even heard it said that the Christ child himself sometimes comes down to bless the meeting. What if we could see him?"

The day before Christmas it was bitterly cold and a few lonesome snow flakes were flying in the air and there was a hard white crust on the ground.

Sure enough, Pedro and Little Brother were able to slip quietly away early in the afternoon on their way to the celebration; and although the walking was hard in the frosty air, before nightfall they had trudged so far, hand in hand, that they saw the lights of the big city just ahead of them. Indeed they were about to enter one of the great gates in the wall that surrounded it, when they saw something dark on the snow near the path, and stepped aside to look at it.

It was a poor woman who had fallen just outside of the city, too sick and tired and cold to get in where she might have found shelter. The snow made a soft pillow for her and she would soon be so sound asleep in the winter air that no one could ever awaken her again. All this Pedro saw in a moment, and he knelt down beside her and tried to rouse her. He turned her face toward him, so that he could rub some snow on it, but he soon sighed and said:

"It's no use, Little Brother, you will have to go on alone."

"Alone?" cried Little Brother, "and you will not see the Christmas festival?"

"No," said Pedro, and he could not help a little choking sound of disappointment in his throat. "See this poor woman, she will freeze to death if nobody cares for her. You can bring someone to help her when you come back, and I can keep her alive. You can easily find your way to the church, and you must see and hear everything twice, little brother, once for you and once for me. I am sure the Christ child must know how I would love to come and worship him, and, oh, if you get a chance, little brother, slip up to the altar without getting in anyone's way, and take this little silver piece of mine and lay it down for my offering when no one is looking. Don't forget the place where you left me, and hurry, now, so you won't be late."

He winked hard to keep back the tears as he heard the crunching footsteps of little brother sounding farther and farther away in the darkness.

It was also hard to lose the music and the splendor of the celebration that he had planned so long, to lose the chance of offering his silver piece that he had saved for the offering to the Christ child, and to spend the time instead in the lonesome snow outside the dreary walls. But it never occurred to him to leave the poor woman in the freezing cold.

The great church was truly a wonderful place that night. Every one said that it had never looked so bright and beautiful before. When the organ played and the thousands of people sang the hymns, the walls shook with the sound, and little Pedro, outside the walls of the city, felt the earth tremble all around him. At last came the procession to bear the offerings to the altar, when great and rich men and women marched 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 laid down a book that he had been making for years, and last of all walked the king of the country, hoping to win for himself the chimes of the Christmas bells.

There was a great murmur through the church as the people saw the king take from his head the royal crown, all set with diamonds and other precious stones, and laid it gleaming on the altar as his offering to the Holy child. "Surely," said every one, "we shall hear the bells now, for nothing like this has ever been offered before."

And they all stood still to listen, but only the cold, cold wind was heard in the stone tower; and the people shook their heads, some of them saying as they had done before, that they really never believed the story of the chimes, anyway.

The procession was over, and the gifts were all on the altar, the choir had begun the closing hymn.

Suddenly the organist stopped playing, and every one looked at the minister, who was standing in his place holding up his hand for silence. Not a sound could be heard from anyone in the church. While all the people strained their ears to listen, there came softly but distinctly swinging through the air the sound of the bells in the tower. So far away and yet so clear seemed the music, so much sweeter were the notes than had been heard before, 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.

## HAD BRONCHITIS FOR YEARS

Bronchitis comes from a neglected cold, and it, if neglected, will surely turn into pneumonia. The first symptom is a short, painful, dry cough, accompanied with rapid wheezing and a feeling of oppression or tightness through the chest.

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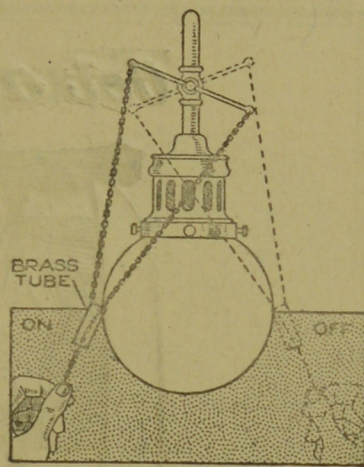
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From China comes a long list of dainties that would be repugnant to the Western eye and palate. Birds' nest soup is well known, and so is trepang, the sea slug, in whose capture many Chinese fishermen earn their living. In the streets of Canton there may be seen, exposed for sale to such as care to buy, rats, dogs, crows, piles of the larvae of bees and moths, and many other edibles of whose origin the Western traveller shudders to think.

Many curious dishes are beloved of the natives of the various republics of South America. The Indians of the Amazon basin eat snake. Bear meat is enjoyed by those inhabiting the Andes uplands, and has been pronounced excellent by hunters. In the Chilian markets there may be seen heaps of small, immature octopi, fated to be made into soup, and also bundles of seaweed, which is stewed and served as a vegetable, and highly esteemed for its valuable tonic and blood-cleansing properties.

Like the French, the Chilians eat the legs of large frogs, which may be caught or reared. Prickly sea urchins, called by the natives "erizos," are eaten raw, as are also large mussels, called "choros." There are no rabbits indigenous to Chili; but the place of that useful little animal is taken by the common pussy cat, who is frequently made into "cazuela," a native dish, which is something between a soup and a stew. Many a traveller, lurching at some wayside inn of Chili, on inquiring the ingredients of the appetizing dish he has just consumed, has been told, to his horror: "Guto piquante, señor" (savory cat)!

Some men are born artistic liars; some acquire the art of lying; but most of them merely get married and have it gradually thrust upon them.



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