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The Christmas Bells
Words: George Taylor (1835-1903)
Music: Arthur Johnstone, 1885

Hark! the bells of Christmas ringing!
All abroad their echoes flinging!
Wider still and wider winging
On the waste of wintry air-
On their solemn, swift vibrations,
Rapture, rapture through the nations!
Rapture, till their glad pulsations
Million blissful bosoms share!

Every bell to every hammer
Answers with a joyous clamor-
Answers, till from out the glamour
Of the ages far and dim,
Till from Bethlehem's stable lowly,
Fair as moonrise, opening slowly,
Streams of radiance pure and holy
Down the brightening centuries swim.

Then the bells ring fine and tender;
And from out that far-off splendor,
Veiled in light no dreams could lend her,
Lo, the virgin mother mild,
Pale from guiltless pain unspoken,
Calm in faith's deep trust unbroken,
Bright the Heaven's unconscious token,
Bends above her wondrous child!

Still the bells ring softly, sweetly,
Mingling all their chimes so meetly,
Trancing all my soul completely,
Till the rosy clouds divide;
And o'er Bethlehem's mountains hoary
Bursts a strange celestial glory,
Swells a sweet, seraphic story,
Trembling o'er the pastures wide!

Glory! glory! God, descending
Weds with man in bliss unending!
Hark! th'ecstatic choirs attending
Smite their lyres with tempest sound!
Shout! Old discord's reign is riven!
Peace on earth! good-will is given!
Shout the joy through highest Heaven!
Make the crystal spheres resound!

Earth's sad wails of woe and wrangling-
Like wild bells in night-storms jangling,
Now their jarring tones untangling,
In some deep, harmonious rhyme-
Touched by Love's own hand supernal,
Hush their dissonance infernal,
Catch the rhythmic march eternal,
Throbbing through the pulse of time,

Lo, the Babe, where, glad, they found Him,
By the chrismal light that crowned Him!
See the shaggy shepherds round Him,
Round His manger, kneeling low!
See the star-led Magi speeding,
Priest and scribe the record reading,
Craft and hate each omen heeding,
Brooding swift the direful blow!

Vain the wrath of kings conspiring;
Vain the malice demons firing;
On the nations, long desiring,
Lo, at last, the Day-star shines!
Earth shall bless the hour that bore Him;

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**Unborn empires fall before Him,
Unknown climes and tribes adore Him
In ten thousand tongues and shrines.**

**Hark! the Christmas bells, resounding,
Earth's old jargon all confounding!
Round the world their tumult, bounding,
Spreads Immanuel's matchless fame!
Million hands their offerings bringing,
Million hearts around Him clinging,
Million tongues hosanna singing,
Swell the honors of His name!**

**Crown Him, monarchs, seers, and sages!
Crown Him, bards, in deathless pages!
Crown Him king of all the ages!
Let the mighty anthem rise!
Hark! the crash of tuneful noises!
Hark! the children's thrilling voices!
Hark! the world in song rejoices,
Till the chorus shakes the skies!**

**Living Christ, o'er sin victorious,
Dying Lamb, all-meritorious,
Rising God, forever glorious,
Take our songs and hearts, we pray.
May we, Thee by faith descrying,
On Thy death for life relying,
Rise to rapture never-dying,
Rise with Thee, in endless day.**

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