

# Jingle Bells - By - Frank R. Adams

WHAT HAPPENED SO FAR  
Tom Bilbeck is the narrator. He is a fat newspaper writer who drives a tumbledown car he calls Grandmother Page. He is in love with Maryella, his rival being Jim Cooper. The three are members of an amateur dramatic club. Plans for a play at the Old Soldiers' Home are under way. Grandmother Page has engine trouble while Maryella is out driving with Bilbeck, and Cooper in his big roadster, takes Maryella home. After Maryella has left Bilbeck is able to start his car again. The amateur players are to give Pygmalion and Galatea. In their version Bilbeck is to act as the statue, and Maryella gets peevish when she discovers that Bilbeck is bowlegged. Mrs. Hemmingway later flatters Bilbeck and talks to him about the play. Bilbeck gets her hand, only to find a rough hand grasping him by the shoulder and lifting him out of his seat. Mr. Hemmingway, husband of one of the members, thinks Bilbeck is in love with his wife. During the argument the two men receive notice that there is a jail escape at the penitentiary. This escape keeps Bilbeck busy at his newspaper work, so that he gets away from the dramatic club. But Maryella summons him and starts telling the story of "Dollyanna" who believes that everything that happens turns out for the best. The players arrive at the Old Soldiers' Home, being greeted royally and meeting Plik Henweather and others. The play at the Old Soldiers' Home is interrupted because of a fire, the players and veterans escaping. Riding away from the scene of the ill-fated play in their costumes and overcoats, they are held up by escaped convicts, one of whom is captured by Bilbeck after a struggle.

**NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY**  
He obeyed meekly enough. "Will you answer one question?" he asked deferentially. "Yes. What?" "Are you a ghost?" "No." "Then what are you?" "I only agreed to answer one question." "Oh!" He was obviously disappointed. "What are you going to do with me?" "Turn you over to the sheriff, I suppose." The sound of the shot has aroused curiosity at the Old Soldiers' Home, and now half a dozen of the most nearly complete of the inmates led by Colonel Stewart came down the road in military order. They were armed with rifles with bayonets fixed. I learned afterwards that the weapons were Spanish-American War trophies which were not loaded and had not been fired for sixteen years. We told the Colonel what had happened and he sent one of the old men back to the Home with the ladies with instructions to telephone the sheriff. The rest of us went after the other escaped prisoner.

He had broken away from the road and gone into a patch of woods that lay alongside, as we could easily tell by his fresh tracks in the snow. It seemed as if it was going to be a comparatively simple matter to trail him. We changed our minds, however, when the tracks led out of the comparative quiet of the timber land to a meadow. Here they ceased abruptly. There was enough wind blowing so that the snow was kept clear in some places and drifted in others. He had evidently avoided the drifts. We had only one lantern or we could have searched to better advantage and by spreading out might have picked up the footprints without much delay. As it was we worked slowly and ineffectively. A complete circle of the field gave us no more clue. The snow was falling more rapidly now and even our own tracks were filled in very soon after we had made them. I was anxious to get started, too, while the roads were not badly drifted. "I think we've done all we can to-night," I suggested to Colonel Stewart. "That fellow is going to have a hard time travelling very far in this storm and probably he'll lay low somewhere until it lets up. The sheriff can organize a big posse and pick him up after daylight."

The Colonel agreed. He was anxious to get his men under cover. We took our prisoner back to the Home. There we found the lady Greeks sitting around disconsolate with their wraps amid a group of negligence but wide awake old soldiers having the time of their lives over the extra attraction of a thief hunt. There were no handcuffs in the institution, naturally, so we bound our prisoner to a chair pending the arrival of the sheriff. He looked disconsolate enough. I was suddenly sorry for him. Poor fellow, all he had done was to make a break for liberty. It was only because we were all against him that he was against us. "Hard luck, old chap," I said to him. He looked up at me. "It's all right,"

he said. "I don't mind a bit. I'm glad to stay here overnight, where it's warm. I'm kind of worried over Julius, though, out there in the snow. I wish you'd got him, too. He's delicate, and I'm afraid he'll catch cold. "Well, I'm going home," I said, by way of farewell. "But before I go is there anything I can do for you?" "Not unless you're going to tell me what you are wearing those white things for. Did somebody steal your—"

"No, they didn't," I snapped, turning away. "Ain't you going to tell me?" "No." I rejoined the rest of our group around the fire. "I'm going out and start the car," I notified them, "and back up to the gate once more. When you hear me outside you can come out." "Let me come with you," Jim Cooper offered. I would just as soon have gone alone, but there seemed no way of declining his assistance so we trailed out in the snow together with an oil lantern flickering unsteadily in the wind. It was only a few hundred yards to where the automobile was standing, but the wind, which was increasing, threw the snow into our faces in stinging blasts that made walking difficult and conversation practically impossible. The lights of the car were still bravely hurling wedges of illumination into the black and white night. The seats were covered with snow. So was the windshield; around each wheel was a little heap. "You can get inside if you will," I told Cooper, "and advance the spark as soon as I get an explosion."

He did as I directed. I primed the motor thoroughly. I had no particular reason to suppose that the engine would start new when it had refused to do so half an hour before, except that from long experience I had great faith in the perversity of inanimate subjects, especially internal combustion engines. Grandmother Page had thrown me down in an emergency, but now that the immediate danger was over I had no doubt that she would start up cheerfully. There is something unmistakably feminine about a gasoline engine. "All ready," I said as I gave the crank a sharp pull upward. I noticed that it pulled rather hard, but I bent an extra effort and yanked it over compression. "Bang!" responded Grandmother Page enthusiastically. The first explosion was followed by a hideous clashing sound and then a

terrifying thumping which could be heard above the explosion of the motor. "Cut her off!" I yelled. When Grandmother Page had subsided Jim Cooper asked solicitously: "What's the matter?" "Didn't you hear the racket she was making?" I asked sarcastically. "I didn't hear anything special," Jim observed, which remark put him by unanimous vote into the Loyal Order of Henwhethers. Plik had nothing on him for saying the wrong thing. In silent exasperation I lifted the hood and with the aid of the lantern examined Grandmother's gizzard. One look was enough. I closed the hood once more and stood silent, communing with nature. Something in my manner must have penetrated Jim Cooper's consciousness. "Is anything the matter," he asked. "There is. The pump froze while we were hunting for the escaped convicts, and as soon as I started the engine she stripped her gear. She won't run again until I get some new parts from the factory."

I turned out the lights and started for the Home. Jim Cooper followed silently. Halfway to the home he said brightly: "It's all for the best, Tom. Think how glad the automobile repair man will be." When we entered the ladies stood up ready to go. "I didn't hear you come," said Maryella. "The car is awfully quiet tonight, isn't it?" "It is," I assented glumly, "and will be for several days to come. When I had explained what had happened a cry of dismay escaped the lips of Mrs. Hemmingway. "I promised John I would come right home as soon as the performance was over, and he will be terribly anxious," she wailed. "I wish I had gone home in the funeral bus," bemoaned Mrs. Lillelove. "I wish you had," I echoed feelingly. "It's probably all for the best," chirped Jim Cooper like a parrot. (Ornithologist's note: Parrots do not chirp.) "Where do you find a ray of comfort in this," I demanded. "That's easy," Jim explained. "For one thing I am glad that it wasn't my car. For another it will give us a chance to spend the night in an Old Soldier's Home, which is something most people who aren't veterans can't do."

"Spend the night here?" Mrs. Hemmingway exclaimed in dismay. "It's impossible. I have to go home."

"How?" "I don't know, but you must think up some way."

"Nonsense," I exclaimed. "It can't be done tonight. There's no train until morning. You can tell your husband and explain it to him."

"Oh, is there a telephone?" "Sure. There must be," said Jim Cooper. "You talk to John and tell him it's all for the best."

"I'll try," Mrs. Hemmingway said cheerfully. The telephone was conveniently located in the living room so that all private conversations were distinctly audible to any one in the building. After considerable delay in getting a long distance connection, Mrs. Hemmingway managed to get the ear of her husband, who fortunately had not left the office. "Is that you, John?" she asked in the telephone. Apparently it was. "Well, listen, John dear, I can't get home tonight. I'm going to stay all night at the Old Soldier's Home."

The rest of us tried to talk about something else so as not to appear to be listening, but we couldn't help it, and a sudden silence fell at her next remark. "Yes, of course Tom Bilbeck is here. It's all for the best."

The receiver hummed for a moment. Even we knew that he had raised his voice. "Silly; of course I'd come home if I could. But Tom broke his auto."

"No, no, he didn't break it on purpose."

"Listen, dear, you must not say such things over the telephone. Some one might be listening. Besides, you are entirely mistaken. How could I fall in love with a man like Tom Bilbeck?" There was absolute silence in the room, also on the part of Mrs. Hemmingway. "Yes, he has a funny face. Of course I laugh at him and all that, but—What's that? You're coming here? Oh! Is there a train yet coming this way? Good! That will be lots of fun. Then we can go home together in the morning. I am so glad. Good-by, dear!" Mrs. Hemmingway hung up the receiver and turned back to our frantic, ally silent company. I wished that I could say something to show that I

was alive, but my throat choked. Something in my face must have shown, however, because Mrs. Hemmingway looked at me and exclaimed in dismay: "Did you hear what I said, Tom?" "Well, part of it," I admitted. "You mustn't think I meant it." She tried hastily to repair the harm she had done. "I simply had to make John think it was all right."

A loud "Whoa!" outside distracted our attention from the conversational tangle into which we had fallen. "The sheriff!" exclaimed Colonel Stewart, going to the door. A fur-wrapped figure came in, shedding snow. "Evening, sheriff," the colonel greeted. The sheriff unwrapped a muffler which had been over his mouth before he responded. "Evening, Colonel."

**TO BE CONTINUED**  
Perkins at Waldport—George Perkins, local contractor, spent Sunday on a trip to Waldport, Oregon.

EXCURSION TO ODELL LAKE TO BE SPONSORED  
Another excursion into the Cascades is announced by the Southern Pacific company for Sunday, July 28. A special train will leave Eugene at 7 o'clock Sunday morning for Odell Lake, located almost on the very summit of the mountains. The excursion is being sponsored by the summer school of the University of Oregon and the Eugene Obsidian club. Marlon McClain, West Springfield man and manager of the University Co-op at Eugene, will act as the conductor for the trip. Special attractions at the lake will include fishing, boating and dancing. Riding horses will be available for those who desire them. Round trip tickets to the lake will sell for \$1.75 and may be obtained at the local Southern Pacific depot. Carl Olson urges those who are intending to go purchase their tickets early so that plenty of room will be provided.


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