

# Jingle Bells - By - Frank R. Adams

**WHAT HAPPENED SO FAR**  
Tom Bilbeck is the narrator. He is a fat newspaper writer who drives a fumbledown 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 peeved when she discovers that Bilbeck is bowlegged. Mrs. Hemmingway later flatters Bilbeck and talks to him about the play. Bilbeck pats 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.

The captured thief is taken back to the Old Soldiers' Home and the Sheriff is sent for. As the car refuses to budge, the players must stay there, and Mr. Hemmingway, hearing this over the phone, says he is coming right to the home—as he is suspicious of Bilbeck and his wife. Meanwhile the Sheriff arrives.

Hemmingway arrives just when Bilbeck is assisting Mrs. Hemmingway, who has fainted, and of course thinks the worst. Meanwhile a disturbance is heard in the cellar, and all in the house rush down to it.

The Sheriff's horse has broken loose. Meanwhile Hemmingway suspects Bilbeck more and more, and Jim Cooper mixes in to tell Bilbeck he had arranged that the Hemmingways be divorced and that Bilbeck is to marry Mrs. Hemmingway.

**NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY.**

Comrade Dreyenfurth saw that he was not required as a conversational aid, and he left us alone.

"I want to beg your pardon for not speaking to you at breakfast," Mrs. Lillelove went on nervously. "Of course I couldn't before everybody. You understand, don't you, Mr. Bilbeck, that my social position as the wife of the most prominent undertaker and embalmer in town makes it impossible for me to do anything openly that might be talked about?"

I assured her absently that I understood. What was she driving at?

"But beneath my calm, conventional exterior" she went on, "I am terribly romantic! I am very broad, and although the world may flout you for loving another man's wife, I do not censure you. Oh, Mr. Bilbeck, you naughty man!"

She paused to observe the effect of her reproof.

"But how we girls do admire you rakes, you men of the world!"

Covered with blushes at her own temerity, Mrs. Lillelove left me to digest her declaration. This two hundred-pound Venus had seen in me a Don Juan and was secretly envious of Mrs. Hemmingway as the supposed recipient of my attentions.

The poor nut! What a fool situation it was. Probably no man within a radius of a hundred miles was less capable of being a gay deceiver than I, and yet entirely without effort on my part I was thrust into a stellar part in a Decameron romance.

How could I clear myself and be come again what I had been yesterday, a good natured dud, conventionally in love with the sweetest girl in the world?

**CHAPTER X**  
**Skis vs. Snowshoes**

The morning train left at eleven o'clock. The colonel had telephoned the local liveryman to send rigs for our party. The sheriff determined to wait and go in after we had broken the trail.

While we were waiting for the teams to come Comrade Henweather played the phonograph for us. Owing to his affliction his choice of records

was nothing extra. Most of the melodies were very ancient and many were cracked. Evidently the Home got its records from the same source as its magazines.

Everyone was anxious to get away. As the time approached for the rigs to come the women folk got on their wraps and sat around expectantly near the door so as not to keep us waiting.

Maryella had spoken to me when she came into the room.

"I suppose I ought to congratulate you" she said. "Although I am sure I don't know just what one does say to a man who wins the love of a married woman."

"What are you talking about," I demanded roughly.

"Why, Jim has just told me that he fixed it all up for you," she explained, innocently enough. "He says it is all for the best, because otherwise Mr. Hemmingway would probably have shot you."

"Maybe he will anyway," I added gloomily. What pleasure it would be to pay a fine for assault and battery committed on the person of one James Cooper, alias Jim the Fixer!

The telephone rang. Every one listened with strained attention while the colonel answered it.

"What's that?" he asked after listening a minute. "Can't get the here? . . . One of the horses has hurt himself in a snowdrift? . . . That's too bad. When do you think you can make it? . . . All right."

He hung up.

"I'm sorry, ladies and gentlemen," he said, turning to our group. "The liveryman says they can't get through from town. The drifts are six and eight feet deep in places and they had to turn back."

"What can we do?" wailed Mrs. Lillelove.

"You'll all stay here until they the road broken through. They say that they can make it tomorrow if there is no further fall of snow."

"But there must be some way of getting through to-day?"

"Not unless you use snowshoes."

We sat in moody silence. As hardly any one was speaking to anyone else,

there was not much opportunity for discussion of our situation.

Mr. Hemmingway made the first move. "I'm going to town," he declared. "I can't stand it here any longer. I made it once on snowshoes and I guess I can do it again."

"But the snow is deeper now," objected Mrs. Hemmingway, her maternal concern overcoming her anger for the moment.

"Thank you just as much for your suggestion," her husband said coldly, "but my going and coming has ceased to be any affair of yours."

Mrs. Hemmingway flushed as if she had been struck. I half arose as if to defend her. This was observed by the others, who glanced at one another with significant looks as if to say, "See! The ownership of the woman has passed from the husband to the acknowledged lover!"

"We can't let you go alone," Colonel Stewart objected when Hemmingway began to bundle up preparatory to leaving. "There is really considerable danger."

"Then will someone go with me?" Mr. Hemmingway surveyed our group with disdain. His attitude signified that he did not think there was a man in the lot of us.

"I'll go," I volunteered suddenly. After all, why not? There was nothing to stay for.

"You go with me?" Hemmingway questioned derisively. "There is no object in your trying to get me alone. You have already robbed me of the only thing I care for in life." He cast a tragic glance at the dissolving Mrs. Hemmingway.

"Don't be unreasonable," Jim Cooper put in his oar as usual. "This is all for the best. You ought to be glad to have Tom go with you. If he's with you it's the only way you can be certain that he isn't flirting with your wife."

Jim's argument carried undeniable weight with the distracted husband. I could see him ponder it. Although he had cast her off, the idea of his wife taking up with someone else was galling to him.

At last he said "Come on then, if you're the only one who has the nerve to follow where I lead."

Then came the problem of snowshoes. Hemmingway had his that he had secured in town, but there was not another pair in the institution.

Finally we dug up some skis which had been sent by some charitable contributor with a lack of humor. If you never happened to see any, they are long strips of springy wood about four inches wide turned up at one end like a sled runner. If you can navigate them the chances are that you can spell "fjord" with out breaking the typewriter.

The colonel bade up godspeed and directed us on our way.

"You can't get lost," he assured us. "It may be hard to follow the road on account of everything being piled deep with snow, but if you bear due east you'll come out at the village without fail."

We started, not rapidly as I have heard that Indians and Norwegians travel across snow-fields, but cautiously and slowly. My skis had a tendency to toe out that was very aggravating. Once or twice I had to sit down to argue with them about it. I couldn't follow both of them, and if I went with one I had to leave one leg behind.

On the few occasions when I deflected them from the outward angle they turned the other way and I got my runners crossed.

"If you're trying to make me laugh" said Mr. Hemmingway sarcastically, as I got up and dug the snow out of my eyes and ears, "you may as well give up. I'm not in the humor for it."

I was able to keep still, thank heaven, although it would have given me great pleasure to have swatted him with the flat sice of a ski.

The country round about us was sloping. This is ideal ground, they tell me, for ski running. It was fairly level from the Old Soldiers' Home, however, for several blocks. I was glad of that because it gave me an opportunity to sort of find my ski legs. By the time I could take three steps without tripping or splitting, I considered that I was no longer in the amateur class.

My egotism melted away when we came to the first rise. It was a gentle slope, but I found it difficult to climb. I had to tack or else I found myself slipping backwards.

I tried dismounting from the skis, but found that the snow was up nearly to my waist, and well-knigh impossible to flounder through.

I made it somehow, but Hemmingway on showshoes beat me to the crest by several minutes. He waited there until I got nearly to the top and then he started down the other side.

I gained the summit. It was not very high, but afforded an excellent view of the country. Under the snow it was beautiful. A group of fir trees over at the right with branches borne down with a tremendous load of white was a graceful picture.

"Come on," yelled Hemmingway, half way down the hill. "We have to catch that train."

I wrenched myself away from my contemplation of the beauties of nature and considered the matter of progressing further. I started to walk after him. Soon I was relieved of the necessity of effort. The gentle grade was enough to cause me to slide over the surface of the snow.

It was an exhilarating sensation and very restful. I was suddenly glad that I had skis instead of snowshoes. I had been envying Hemmingway the superior traveling qualities of his equipment, but now I could see that the advantage was going to be all my way. While he walked down the hills I would be gliding gracefully and resting myself for the next hill climb.

Wrapped in pleasant introspection I had scarcely noticed that my speed was increasing a little. Now a slight difficulty in balancing called my attention to it.

I leaned forward a trifle to restore my balance. As I did so I heard a sharp swishing sound as the runners glided swiftly over the snow.

The speed increased. I looked about for some way of slowing up. There seemed to be no brake. It appeared inadvisable to turn sideways as one does on skates in order to stop. Even as I thought, my pace accelerated to such a degree that I abandoned all

idea of doing anything but pray.

Directly in my path, proceeding slowly down the hillside, was John Hemmingway. Headed as I was I could not fail to strike him. I tried to steer in some other direction. It was no use. I flew toward him as a filling to a magnet.

He was blithely unconscious that I was overtaking him. He is a large man and so am I. The result of an impact would be terrible.

I tried to cry out to him, but my voice left my dry throat as only a dry cackle. The only word I could think of was "Fore!"

Intuition made him turn around. He must have read in my eyes that I had lost control because he started to scramble hastily out of my way.

Horror of horrors, my runners, which had hitherto glided straight, as if on rails, now awerved to one side in the direction he was going!

He saw it and redoubled his efforts to get out of range. With mendish perversity the skies turned also. I was almost upon him! He made a supreme effort—and stumbled. O shut my eyes.

**CONTINUED NEXT WEEK**

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## It's Our Home Town and We Like It -

**S**OMEONE once said something about his town which we think applies with particular meaning to our home town. We won't change a word for it suits us just as it stands.

"There are fancier towns than our little town, there are towns that are bigger than this, while the people who live in the smaller towns don't know the excitement they miss.

"There are things you see in the wealthier towns that you can't in the town that's small; and yet, up and down, there's no other town after all.

"It may be that the streets aren't long, they're not wide and maybe not straight, but the neighbors you know in your little town all welcome a fellow—it's great.

"In the glittering streets of the glittering towns with palaces, pavements and thrall, in the midst of the throng you will frequently long for your town after all.

"If you live and you work in your own little town, in spite of the fact that it's small, you'll find it a fact that our own home town is the best little town after all."

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