

**TWEEN
YOU AND ME**

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Tween You and Me by Elfin Hall

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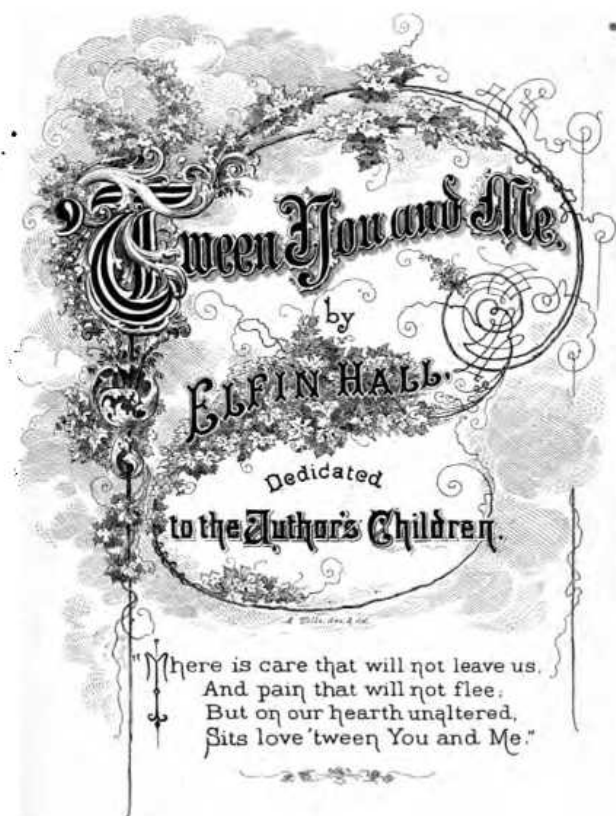
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ELFIN HALL

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Perry, Dorothy Francis Moore



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'Tween You and Me.



“Christmas is Coming.”

COMING to the homes of wealth and luxury in town and in country, and bright eyes grow brighter and rosy cheeks flush with a deeper glow, and plump arms are clasped around the necks of grown-up sisters and aunties, while wonderful secrets are confided to their keeping. Papas come home laden with parcels that quickly disappear into the depths of some dark closet; mammas are out on important errands, never heeding the chill air nor the fast-falling flakes which give warning that a snow storm is setting in. Cooks are deep in the mysteries of jellies, boned-turkey, cakes and ices. Beautiful Christmas trees, glittering with rare and costly gifts, are closely guarded in closed rooms. Dear old Santa Claus, the best and dearest saint in all the calendar to the hearts of the children, is coming this very night after long weeks of glad anticipation.

"Christmas is coming" to the homes in the next street, but it brings no gifts, not even warmth and food. Father is out seeking work; mother is hurrying with numbed fingers to finish a piece of sewing by which to gain a pittance to buy bread for supper. Pale, pinched children are huddled before a scant fire, vainly trying to warm their chilled limbs, and wishing that the cruel winter were over.

The early twilight deepens, and out in the gaslit streets are little blue-faced, half-clad urchins, and girls with ragged shawls drawn tightly over their heads, gazing longingly through plate glass windows upon toys so rare and beautiful they must surely have been imported from fairy land, wondering, perhaps, as older minds sometimes wonder, why they must have no share in all this happiness — why Santa Claus remembers only the rich people, passing by so many homes where little children live and try to be good, where many a little sad-eyed girl keeps house and tends the baby all day long with womanly patience and care, while mother is out doing a day's washing; and the little brother comes in at night cold, tired and hungry, with the few pence earned by selling papers or small wares at the street corners.

Fathers and mothers, and you who have never been called by those sacred names — One who loved little children said :

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father."

Are there not many who pass these forlorn little ones, with the blight of poverty on their lives, who out of their abundance could cause some of their little hearts to thrill with an unusual happiness? And are there not some of us who will sit by our firesides on Christmas Eve with a pain in our hearts that is more keen on these yearly anniversaries, thinking of a loved and beautiful child, whose absence leaves one gift less on our tree? And shall we not in remembrance of these dear ones, removed forever from our care, make for some other little heart a "Merry Christmas?"

Empty Cradles.

STANDING in the nursery is the heavy, old-fashioned mahogany cradle, belonging to a generation that has been. As unlike the dainty little swinging oriole nests that are found in the nurseries of to-day as the frail, delicate, helpless little mothers are unlike the staid, pains-taking, sedate matrons of an age that has glided into the past. How many a dim, dusty old garret has stored away among its rubbish one of these cradles, with heavy, projecting top, which has

shaded many a little face from the summer sunbeams, peering through the great lilac and syringa bushes, that sent their fragrance through the open casement, or shielded it from the draughts when the bare old elm trees "wrung their many hands in the bleak wintry air;" faces that have grown wrinkled and careworn—faces that have grown seared and hardened—faces that are hidden away under waving grass, and myrtle, and daisies, leaving only a memory as faint and sweet as the odor of the blossoms blown through the window by the summer wind.

Not long ago beside these cradles sat the patient mother, in neat gingham or calico dress, black silk apron, plain collar, and hair drawn simply back and fastened by a serviceable comb, nimble fingers deftly plying the knitting needles, or basket of darning by her side, one foot on the rocker, singing a gentle lullaby, or perhaps teaching a little five-year-old daughter to piece neatly together the patchwork blocks for a new quilt. To-day mamma sits by the parlor window in rich silk, and laces, and jewels, trifling with some bit of netting, or crocheting, or embroidery. Bridget is in the nursery giving baby the bottle, in which she has surreptitiously admixed a little soothing syrup to insure a quiet sleep, that she may spend the evening in the kitchen with her "second cousin," while papa and mamma are at some fashionable assembly.