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AUNT LOUISA'S
LONDON TOY BOOKS



THE ROBIN'S
CHRISTMAS EVE

LONDON.

FREDERICK WARNE & CO.

Frances Adela Fooks
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Woodforde.

THE ROBIN'S CHRISTMAS EVE.

BY C. E. B.

'T WAS Christmas-time: a dreary night:
The snow fell thick and fast,
And o'er the country swept the wind,
A keen and wintry blast.

The little ones were all in bed,
Crouching beneath the clothes,
Half-trembling at the angry wind,
Which wildly fell and rose.

Old Jem the Sexton rubbed his leg,
For he had got the gout;
He said he thought it wondrous hard
That he must sally out.

Not far from Jem's, another house,
Of different size and form,
Rose high its head, defying well
The fierce and pelting storm.

It was the Squire's lordly home.
A rare old Squire he,
As brave and true an Englishman
As any one could see.

The Squire's lady and himself
Sat cozily together,
When suddenly he roused himself,
To see the kind of weather.

Lifting the shutters' ponderous bar,
He threw them open wide,
And very dark, and cold, and drear
He thought it looked outside.

Ah, Squire! little do you think
A trembling beggar's near,
Although his form you do not see,
His voice you do not hear.

Yes, there he stands,—so very close,
He taps the window-pane;
And when he sees you turn away,
He feebly taps again.

But all in vain; the heavy bar
Was fastened as before;
The Squire's burly form retraced
His highly-polished floor.

Now, is there any one who thinks
It cannot be worth while
To write about a Robin's fate,
And treat it with a smile?

If so, I bid them to their mind
Those words of Scripture call,
Which say that not without God's will
E'en little birds can fall.



p *dr fol*

BOWEN, C.E.
ROBIN'S...

Lca. 1867]



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I. 52

Our Robin's history simple was,
There is not much to tell,—
A little happy singing bird,
Born in a neighbouring dell.

And through the summer, in the wood,
Life went on merrily;
But winter came, and then he found
More full of care was he.

For food grew scarce; so having spied
Some holly-berries red
Within the Rectory garden grounds,
Thither our hero fled.

One evening everything was dull,
The clouds looked very black,
The wind ran howling through the sky,
And then came grumbling back.

The Robin early went to bed,
Puffed out just like a ball;
He slept all night on one small leg,
Yet managed not to fall.

When morning came he left the tree,
But stared in great surprise
Upon the strange unusual scene
That lay before his eyes.

It seemed as if a great white sheet
Were flung all o'er the lawn;
The flower-beds, the paths, the trees,
And all the shrubs were gone!

His little feet grew sadly cold,
And felt all slippery too;
He stumbled when he hopped along
As folks on ice will do.

And yet he had not learnt the worst
Of this new state of things;
He'd still to feel the gnawing pangs
That cruel hunger brings.

No food to-day had touched his beak,
And not a chance had he
Of ever touching it again,
As far as he could see.

At length, by way of passing time,
He tried to take a nap,
But started up when on his head
He felt a gentle tap.

'T was but a snow-flake, after all!
Yet, in his wretched plight,
The smallest thing could frighten him,
And make him take his flight.



But soon he found he must not hope
From these soft flakes to fly:
Down they came feathering on his head,
His back, his tail, his eye!

No gardeners appeared that day;
The Rector's step came by,
And Robin fluttered o'er the snow
To try and catch his eye.

But being Christmas Eve, perhaps
His sermons filled his mind,
For on he walked, and never heard
The little chirp behind.

Half-blinded, on and on he roamed,
Quite through the Squire's park;
At last he stood before the house,
But all was cold and dark.

Now suddenly his heart beats high!
He sees a brilliant glare,
Shutters unfurl before his eyes,
A sturdy form stands there!

He almost frantic grew, poor bird!
Fluttered, and tapped the pane,
Pressed hard his breast against the glass,
And chirped,—but all in vain!

So on he went, and as it chanced,
He passed into a lane,
And once again he saw a light
Inside a window-pane.

Chanced, did we say? let no such word
Upon our page appear:
Not *chance*, but watchful Providence,
Had led poor Robin here.

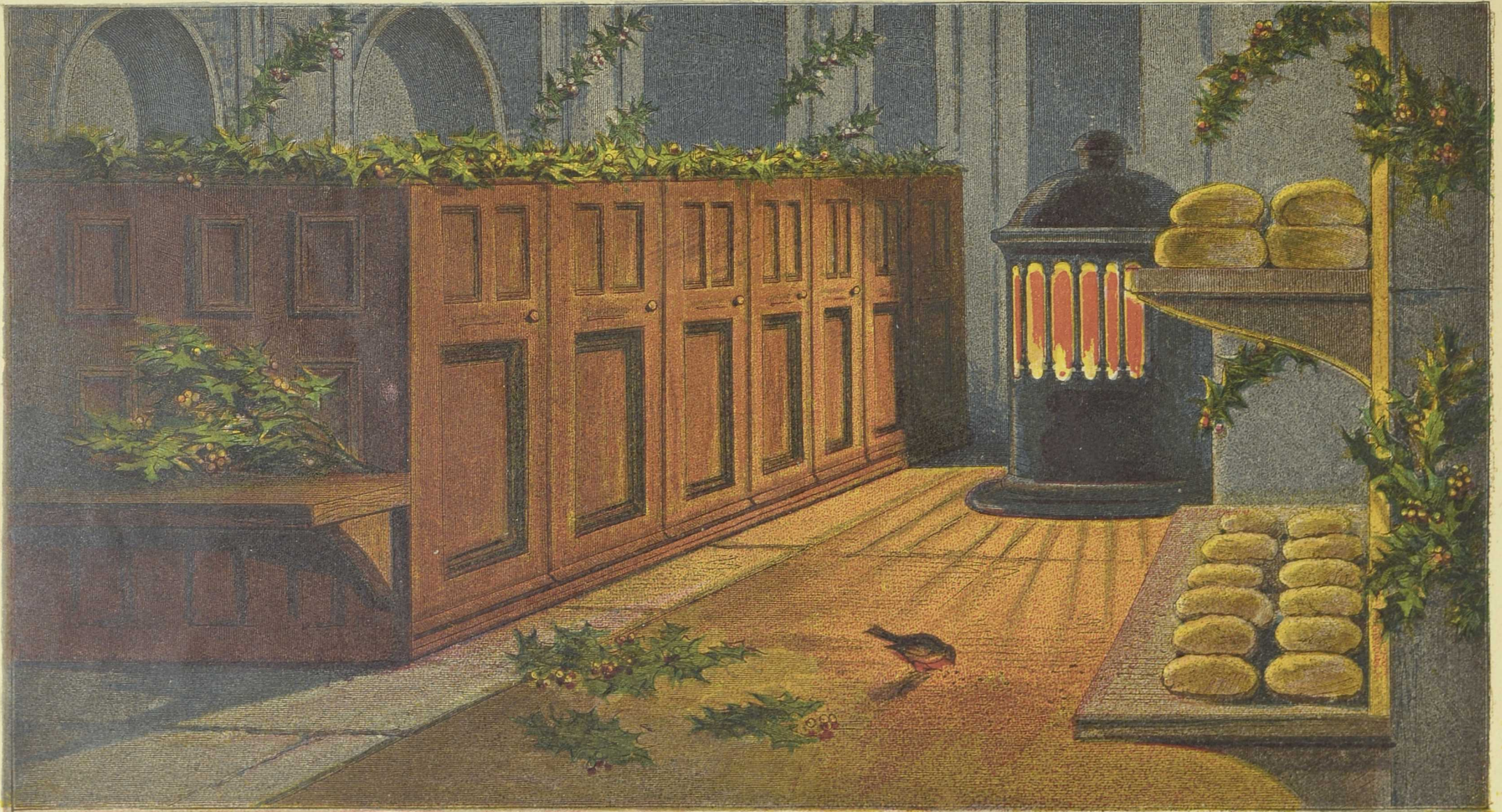
'Twas Jem the Sexton's house from which
Shone forth that cheering light,
For Jem had drawn the curtain back
To gaze upon the night.

And now, with lantern in his hand,
He hobbles down the lane,
Mutt'ring and grumbling to himself,
Because his foot's in pain.

He gains the church, then for the key
Within his pocket feels,
And as he puts it in the door
Robin is at his heels.

Jem thought, when entering the church,
That he was all alone,
Nor dreamed a little stranger bird
Had to its refuge flown.





The stove had not burnt very low,
But still was warm and bright,
And round the spot whereon it stood
Threw forth a cheerful light.

Jem lost no time; he flung on coals,
And raked the ashes out,
Then hurried off to go to bed,
Still grumbling at his gout.

Now Robin from a corner hopped,
Within the fire's light;
Shivering and cold, it was to him
A most enchanting sight.

But he is almost starved, poor bird!
Food he must have, or die:
Useless it seems, alas! for that
Within these walls to try.

Yet, see! he makes a sudden dart;
His searching eye has found
The greatest treasure he could have,—
Some bread-crumbs on the ground!

Perhaps 't is thought by those who read,
Too doubtful to be true,
That just when they were wanted so
Some hand should bread-crumbs strew.

But this was how it came to pass:
An ancient dame had said
Her legacy unto the poor
Should all be spent in bread.

So every week twelve wheaten loaves
The Sexton brought himself,
And crumbs had doubtless fallen when
He placed them on the shelf.

Enough there were for quite a feast,
Robin was glad to find;
The hungry fellow ate them all,
Nor left one crumb behind.

He soon was quite himself again,
And it must be confessed
His first thought, being warmed and fed,
Was all about his breast.

To smooth its scarlet feathers down
Our hero did not fail,
And when he'd made it smart, he then
Attended to his tail!

Worn though he was with sheer fatigue
And being up so late,
He did not like to go to bed
In such a ruffled state.



His toilet done, he went to sleep,
And never once awoke
Till, coming in on Christmas morn,
Jem gave the stove a poke.

Then in alarm he flew away
Along the middle aisle,
And perching on the pulpit-top,
He rested there awhile.

But what an unexpected sight
Is this that meets his eyes!
The church is dressed with holly green,
To him so great a prize.

For 'mongst the leaves the berries hung,
Inviting him to eat;
On every side were hundreds more,—
A rich and endless treat.

He could not know that Christian folks
Had brought the holly green,
That so their joy for Jesu's birth
Might in this way be seen.

Now, very soon a little troop
Of children entered in:
They came to practise Christmas songs
Ere service should begin.

The Rector followed them himself,
To help the young ones on,
And teach their voices how to sing
In tune their Christmas song.

And first he charged them all to try
And feel the words they sang;
Then reading from his open book,
He thus the hymn began:

“Glory to God from all
To whom He's given breath;
Glory to God from all
Whom He has saved from death.”

Now, when the Rector's voice had ceased,
The children, led by him,
Were just about, with earnest voice,
The verse of praise to sing,

When suddenly, from high above,
Another song they hear,
And all look up in hushed amaze,
At notes so sweet and clear.

'T was Robin sitting on a spray
Of twisted holly bright;
His light weight swayed it, as he sang
His song with all his might.



His heart was full of happiness,
And this it was that drew
Praise to his Maker, in the way,
The only way, he knew.

It seemed as though he understood
The words he just had heard,
As if he felt they suited him,
Though but a little bird.

The Rector's finger lifted up,
Kept all the children still,
Their eyes uplifted to the bird
Singing with open bill.

They scarcely breathed, lest they should
One note of that sweet strain; [lose
And Robin scarcely paused before
He took it up again.

Now, when he ceased, the Rector thought
That he would say a word;
For Robin's tale had in his breast
A strong emotion stirred.

"Children," said he, "that little voice
A lesson should have taught:
It seems to me the Robin's song
Is with instruction fraught.

"He was, no doubt, in great distress;
Deep snow was all around;
He might have starved, but coming here,
Both food and shelter found.

"Seek God, my children, and when times
Of storm and trouble come,
He'll guide you as He did the bird,
And safely lead you home.

"Another lesson we may learn
From those sweet notes we heard,
That God has given voice of praise
To that unconscious bird;

"But unto us His love bestows
A far more glorious gift,
For we have *reason*, and our *souls*,
As well as voice, can lift."

The Rector paused, for now rang forth
The merry Christmas chime,
And warned them all that it was near
The usual service-time.

And we must close the Robin's tale:
'T will be a blessed thing
Should it have taught but one young voice
To praise as well as sing.

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