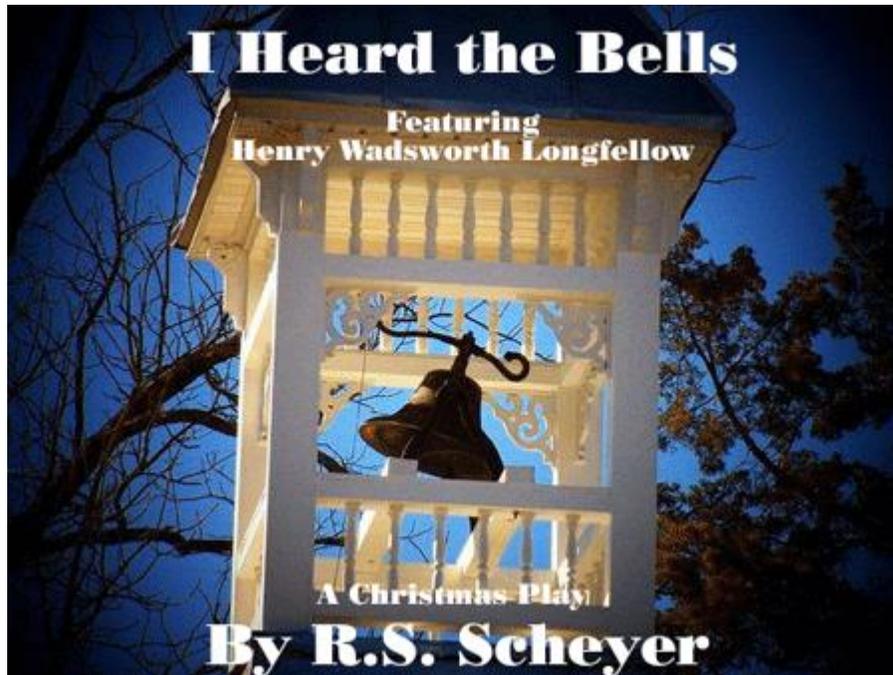


# The Day of Days



A Christmas Monologue  
By R. Scheyer  
(C) November, 2000

## The Day of Days

**Scenario:** Henry Wadsworth Longfellow reminisces about writing "*I Heard The Bells On Christmas Day.*"

**Time:** Approx. 7 minutes

### Characters:

**LONGFELLOW:** The man himself. Apparently quite a character. Had long flowing golden hair and beard. An overpowering presence. Robust, heavy brow in all the pictures. He was 56 when this scene takes place.

### Props:

\_\_\_\_\_A chair and desk as would appear in the mid-1800s.

\_\_\_\_\_Telegram

\_\_\_\_\_Sheet with handwriting on it.

\_\_\_\_\_Quill pen and ink jar.

## The Day of Days

LONGFELLOW: (*Sound of bells over music system. Maybe a window in back with picture of church in it. LONGFELLOW is seated at desk and first appears to be writing. He looks up, as if someone has come into the room, picks up what looks like a poem, stands, and goes around desk. Leans back against it, and says loudly:*) Of all the days, Christmas.

(*Shaking head, introspective. Talking to audience, but more to self.*)

Hear those bells? The sound of them woke me early this morning. They always ring those bells on Christmas morning within ear shot of the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow household. It is such a joy to hear them. And I, being a writer of some renown, as you know, was inspired to pen a poem. So, I jumped from my bed and from my heart flowed: (*Reads from paper.*)

I heard the bells on Christmas day.  
Their old familiar carols play. (*Smiles at the thought*)  
And mild and sweet the words repeat,  
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

I thought how, as the day had come,  
The belfries of all Christendom  
Had roll'd along, th'un broken song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

(*Stops, walks towards side of desk. Places poem down and picks up a telegram.*) But then another bell broke the reverie. Our shiny, little front door bell. An urgent, high-pitched ringing, that little bell. And a knocking, a knocking like someone wanted to break down the door. I rushed out and opened the front door. A Union soldier stood there, this telegram in his hand (*Holds up telegram*). I could tell it was from Union Army Headquarters. It's the kind of thing you think only happens to other people. But when you see that particular messenger at your particular door, well, I don't mind telling you, it scared me to death. My hand trembled as I received the telegram. And I said, before I opened it, just as I said to you, 'Of all the days, Christmas.'

I quickly walked back to where you see me now, and carefully open it. (*Looks again at telegram*) The news was bad. My son, a lieutenant in the Union Army, had been wounded. And in my mind's eye, I imagined my son in some broken-down army hospital tent, half unconscious, bandaged and broken, laying on a stretcher, with the sound of artillery shells going off in the distance. I don't mind telling you, I greatly despaired. My countenance fell, and my gaze rested on the poem I had started. I wanted to lash out. And, as tears flooded my eyes, I wrote:

And in despair I bowed my head:  
"There is no peace on earth," I said.  
"For hate is strong, and mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men."

Then from each black, accursed mouth  
The cannon thundered in the South,  
And with the sound the carols drowned  
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

It was as if an earthquake rent  
The hearthstones of a continent.  
And made forlorn, the households born  
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

*(Pauses here, puts down telegram. Walks back to front of desk. Bells in distance up volume slightly. He perks his ear up to hear them again. Another change of countenance.)*

In the silence of my grief, I heard them. The church bells. They kept pealing and singing their old, familiar tunes. Loud and clear they proclaimed the Christmas message. "For unto us is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." And the sound of those Christmas bells brought me back. I took great comfort in knowing that God is still on His throne. So, I took a moment, collected my thoughts, and finished the poem:

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
The wrong shall fail; the right prevail  
With peace on earth, good will to men."

'Til ringing, singing on its way,  
The world revolved from night to day.  
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,  
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

*(Introspective again, shaking head slightly. Leans back against the desk, smiles, almost yells:)*

LONGFELLOW: The day of days, Christmas! (Lights fade).

The End