

Ripping Reads No 27 November 2018



It Came Upon The Midnight Clear
by Jilly Day

I have owned this charming little book for many years but, due to its age and delicacy, limit myself to looking through it at Christmastime. The book is simply constructed from card and measures a mere 3¾ inches by 2½ inches, but it is laced with gold thread and beautifully coloured illustrations add richness and lustre to the text.

The flyleaf is inscribed to Margaret from her loving aunt. While knowing nothing about Margaret, I feel a closeness towards a kindred spirit. Given its excellent condition, Margaret quite obviously cared for and cherished her book. Owning an old book is a privilege and evokes a bond with the past which echoes down the years.

It Came Upon The Midnight Clear is one of my favourite carols. Dating from 1849, the words were originally written as a poem by Edmund Hamilton Sears, a pastor from Massachusetts. A year later, Richard Stors Willis set the words to

music and this remains the tune most widely sung in the United States. However Britain and the Commonwealth tend to favour a 1874 musical adaptation by Sir Arthur Sullivan.

