



The Origin of the Christmas Tree

Long, long years ago when the days were getting shorter and shorter, the nights longer and longer, the people feared that the sun would cease to shine. They met under a great oak tree sacred to the god, Thor, god of war and thunder.

A young man traveling through northern Europe and seeing altars under the trees, where the people offered sacrifices to their god, decided to spend his life teaching these folk. He spent many years preaching and teaching, but few gave up their religion. One cold winter's night toward the end of the year, he went into the forest where the people gathered to celebrate, and were about to offer sacrifices under the Thunder Oak, believed to be guarded by the mighty Thor.

At the foot of the Thunder Oak, a bright fire burned; in the center knelt a young boy about to be sacrificed to Thor. In the midst of the crowd of heathens, Winifred began to cut down the oak. As he cut farther and farther into the heart of the tree, the crowd watched for the stroke from Thor that would kill him.

But he chopped away, the chips flew

Christmas Cakes and Cookies

Plain Foundation Cake—1/4 cupful shortening, 1/2 cupful sugar, 1 egg, 1/2 cupful milk or water, 1/4 teaspoonful salt, 3/4 teaspoonful baking powder, 1 teaspoonful vanilla, 1 1/2 cupfuls flour. Cream the butter and the sugar thoroughly, then add the well-beaten eggs. Sift the flour and salt and add alternately with the liquid, keeping the mixture of an even consistency. Mix quickly, beat hard and fold in lightly the baking powder sifted over the top and the flavoring. Turn into well-greased pan and bake in a moderate oven thirty to forty minutes. Make one layer.

Variations of Plain Foundation Cake.
White Cake: Use three egg whites in place of the whole egg.
Gold Cake: Use four egg yolks in place of the whole egg.
Mocha Cake: Use cold coffee in place of the liquid called for.
Chocolate Cake: Add two squares of melted chocolate and a little less flour.
Nut Cake: Add one-half cupful of chopped nuts, slightly floured.
Spice Cake: Add one-half teaspoonful of cinnamon, one half teaspoonful of mixed allspice, nutmeg and cloves.

Variations in Tins and Shapes.
Loaf Cake: Bake in a small loaf pan or double the ingredients and bake in a large loaf pan. Loaf cakes keep well.
Layer Cake: For a small cake cut the one layer in two and frost, making a two layer cake half size or double size the amount and bake in two layer pans.
Cup Cakes: Drop the mixture into well-greased muffin pans, filling the pans about two-thirds full and bake about twenty-five minutes. Or use the small muffin pans and bake fifteen minutes. These make dainty little cakes for all purposes.
Fancy Cakes: Heat tiny fancy-shaped pans, then brush with a good butter dipped in melted fat. Drop a teaspoonful of cake mixture into each pan and bake ten to fifteen minutes. Or a one-layer cake may be cut into fancy shapes with a cutter, but there is a waste unless great care is taken to plan the pieces.
Christmas Plum Pudding. 1 cupful dried bread crumbs, 1 cupful sugar, 1 cupful beef suet, 1 cupful brown sugar, 1 cupful seeded raisins, 1 cupful currants, 1/2 cupful finely cut citron, 1/2 cupful finely cut figs, 1 tablespoonful candied orange peel, 1 tablespoonful nutmeg, 1/4 teaspoonful cinnamon, 1/4 teaspoonful cloves, 1/4 teaspoonful ginger,

THE FAITH OF DANDY JIM

The Countess Dolidena, who was a brand-new and very handsome Christmas doll, gave her lace overskirt a final shake and tossed her golden curls. Then with her big blue eyes she stared at Dandy Jim, and said, "You see Elizabeth already likes me far better than she does you! Here it is two whole days since I was taken from beneath the glistening Christmas tree, and this is the first time she has left me. She would have taken me to church to hear the Christmas carols, only her father told her it was better to leave her new doll at home."

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A Message in Music

It was two o'clock, and time for the third watch on the night-herd. These two facts gradually impressed themselves on the consciousness of John Talbot Waring, as he was thumped into vakelhetts.

The dim light of the smoky lantern swinging from the pole of the dripping tent revealed the rolled-up forms of a dozen snoring shivering cow-punchers, covered together like sardines in a box. It also made visible an expression of disgust on the features of Mr. Waring, while falling completely to disclose the whereabouts of his missing boots.

Waring, exasperated, in a few well-chosen words, his opinions of boots in general and his own wet ones in particular. "Burling his 'sleeker,' which had been serving temporarily as a pillow, he enveloped himself in his company folds, and followed his fall fellow-victims of stern duty out into the drizzling rain.

There was a moon above the heavy clouds, but it might as well have been on the other side of the earth, for all the assistance it gave in the operation of saddling two of the picketed horses. The herd lay to the north of the camp, and settling reluctantly into their seats, the drovers riders turned their horses in that direction, trusting to the instinct of the animals to find the cattle.

Presently the sound of a hoarse voice tunelessly raised in a dismal minor melody came faintly to their ears, and as they neared the singer they became aware that he was entertaining the public to "take him in the graveyard, and place a sod o'er him," varying the monotony of this request by begging someone to "bury him next on the lone prairie." The effect of this mournful music was indescribably gruesome, and Waring found himself wondering why cow-punchers invariably choose such gloomy themes for their songs.

Approaching carefully, to avoid startling the cattle, the two riders separated, and relieving the tired watchers, commenced their dreary three hours' vigil, on opposite sides of the herd. The cattle were unusually quiet, and as he rode slowly along the edge of the black mass of sleeping animals, Waring had ample opportunity to reflect on the disadvantages of a cow-puncher's life.

The rain ran in little streams from the skirts of his oil-skin coat into his already soaked boots. The chill wind pierced his damp clothes, and made him shiver in the saddle. For the hundredth time within a week Waring condemned himself as an unutterable ass for relinquishing the comforts of civilization for this hard life on a cattle ranch in Alberta.

He recalled his arrival on the ranch six months before, a "tenderfoot," and the various tribulations he had endured incident to his transformation into a full-fledged cow-puncher. Of the hardships and dangers which come to every rider of the ranch he had experienced his share, and faced them bravely, thereby winning the respect of the rough, non-hearted men among whom he had cast his lot.

But all the weary months had been wasted; he had failed in his object; he could not forget. He was not the first to learn that one cannot easily escape memory. It even seemed to him that, instead of growing more endurable with time, the soreness in his heart and the sting of regret increased with every passing day. He wondered, if she felt the separation, if she cared. As his thoughts wandered back over the past two years, he recalled every incident of their acquaintance as distinctly as though it had occurred but yesterday. The day he had first

notes on the card! It had come to him like a flash. He tore open his coat and drew the postcard from an inner pocket. There was no mistake. He had solved the mystery. Almost mechanically he reached for a pencil, and wrote the words under the lines of music, added a signature, and gazed long and earnestly, his face a perfect kaleidoscope of changing expressions; then, with a wild shout, he wheeled and rode furiously to camp.

Pulling up with a jerk that almost lifted the iron-waded bronco from the ground, he literally hurled himself from the saddle, and reached the Boss in two bounds.

"I must be in Calgary to-night! I want your best horse, quick!"

The Boss stared at him in astonishment.

"Why, man, it's a hundred and twenty miles. You're crazy."

Waring fairly stamped in his impatience.

"It's only sixty to Howden," he cried, "and I can get the train there. It leaves at one o'clock, and I can make it, if you'll lend me Star. I know he's your pet horse, and you never let anybody ride him, but I tell you, Mr. Coberly, this means everything to me. I simply must get there."

Coberly scowled. "You ought to know, Jack, that I won't lend Star. None of the other horses can get you over there in that time, so you might as well give it up. What on earth's the matter with you that you're in such a confounded rush?"

Waring thought a moment, and then, drawing the Boss beyond earshot of the listening cow-punchers, spoke to him rapidly and earnestly, finally handing him the postcard. Coberly scanned it intently, and a change came over his face. When he looked up, it was with an expression of respect mingled with amazement.

"Why didn't you show me this at first. Of course you can have the horse, but I tell you, Mr. Coberly, I'm round up the horses an' rope Star for Mr. Waring. Jump lively!"

The men made a rush for their saddles, and in an incredibly short time several of them were racing across the prairie in the direction of the horses.

A rush of hoofs announced the arrival of the horse and his escort. A dozen hands made quick work of saddling, and with a hurried good-bye all around, Waring swung himself up astride of the magnificent animal, and was off on his long ride.

The long, pacing stride of Coberly's pet covered the ground in a surprising manner, and eight o'clock found twenty-three miles behind his nimble feet and the Bar Triangle Ranch in sight. A five-minute stop, and then on again. It was twenty minutes to ten when Waring drew rein. He unsaddled the big thoroughbred. A half-hour's rest would put new life into him. Twenty-two miles remained to be covered, and nearly three hours in which to do it.

At quarter past ten, Star, refreshed by an energetic rubbing and a mouthful of water, was carrying him up the road, with no apparent diminution of power. On, on they went, leaving mile after mile of prairie road behind them. At last there was only five miles between him and Howden.

Rounding a turn in the road, he espied a horseman approaching, and turned out to pass him. The man eyed him sharply as he drew near, and suddenly whipped out a six-shooter.

"Hold up there! I want to talk to you."

For a moment Waring considered the chance of riding over the man, but for a moment only. He suddenly recognized the uniform of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police. He brought Star to a sharp halt, searching his mind for an explanation of the hold-up. The officer covered him with the revolver while he said: "I want to know where you're going with Joe Coberly's horse."

"Oh, is that all you want?" said Waring, relieved. "Why, I've been working for Coberly, and he lent me the horse to ride over to catch the train." And he gathered up his reins.

"Hold on, young man!" and the officer adjusted his gun suggestively. "That yarn won't do. I know old Joe, an' I happen to know that he wouldn't lend that horse to his own brother, let alone one of his cow-punchers."

Waring groaned: "Look here, Mr. Officer, I'm telling you God's truth. Coberly let me take the horse because it was the only one that could get me over here in time to catch the train, and I had to be in Calgary to-night without fail."

His captor shook his head: "It's no use, my friend; your story won't hold water. Why are you in such a tearing hurry, anyway?"

Waring remembered the postcard; he reached into his breast pocket and produced it.

"That is my reason for haste," he said, "and that is why Coberly let me take the horse," and he added a few words.

Keeping his captive carefully covered, the officer drew the revolver he carried, the officer rode close, and took the card. As he read it, his face lighted up, and he lowered his gun.

"That's all right, youngster. I'm sorry I stopped you. I don't wonder Joe lent you the horse: I'd have done the same, even if I'd had to walk myself. I hope you won't miss the train, I'll ride down to the station with you."

Obtaining at this satisfactory turn of affairs, Waring touched Star with the spur and rode forward, the officer by his side. They could see the town before them, a mile distant. The train was at the station! Another touch of the spur, and Star stretched out into a run that gradually left the officer behind, well mounted though he was. A half-mile yet to go!—A quarter!—The black muzzle of the revolver he carried, the officer rode close, and took the card. As he read it, his face lighted up, and he lowered his gun.

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At Christmas, the crumpled snow in feathered flakes comes drifting down. And wraps the shoulders of the hills That seem to guard the sleeping town. And in the hush and in the pause That mark the ending of the year, As softly as the falling snow Your gentle spirit draweth near, At Christmas.

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