



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 folks. 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 centre 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 all around. A cackling sound was heard in the top branches, the tree groaned and with a terrible crash fell to the floor, split in four pieces.

But just behind the tree a young green fir tree stood, just as if it had sprung from the very place where the oak had been before. Straight and graceful was the fir with its branches turned upward. "Look!" said the young man, "this little tree is the child of the forest. It shall be your tree; it is the word of peace! For your houses are built of it."

"It is the sign of endless life for its leaves are green. See! It points heavenward!"

"Gather about it, not in the wild woods, but in your homes, where it requires not sacrifices. Take it to the home of the chieftain. You shall no longer go to the shadows of the forest to keep your festivals. You shall keep them at home with laughter and song."

So they took the little fir tree to the home of Gundhar, the chief, where they set the tree in the centre of the hall. Winifred stood at one end of the hall and told the story of Bethlehem while the people listened in silence.

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 wakefulness.

The dim light of the smoke-lantern swinging from the pole of the dripping tent revealed the roll-up forms of a dozen ardently snoring cow-punchers, crumpled 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 expressed, in a few well-chosen words his opinions of boots in general and his own wet ones in particular.

Unrolling his "sticker," which had been serving temporarily as a pillow, he entwined himself in its clammy folds, and followed his tall fellow-herd in 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 setting reluctantly into their seats, the drowsy 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 addressing the public to "take him to the graveyard, and place a sod o'er him," varying the monotony of this request by begging someone to "bury him not 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, lion-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

seen her as she stepped gracefully out beside the piano to sing at a concert he had attended, the sweet days which followed, their enjoyment together of the symphony, oratorio, and opera, for both being amateurs of no mean ability, they had met upon the common ground of their love of divine harmony.

He looked into the blackness of the night, and could see her as she appeared that wonderful day when he had met her at the altar, and spoken the words that were to bind them together through life. He looked back at their wedding trip as at a beautiful dream. How well he remembered the return to the lovely home he had prepared for her, and the first dear days within its walls. How happy they had been, and how he had loved her! Had he loved her? He did love her. That was his sorrow. He realized that as long as he had life, his whole heart would be hers.

And then the shadow had come over their home. He asked himself bitterly why he had not been more patient with her, and made allowances for her high spirit and quick temper. She was such a child. He could see now that he had been to blame many times for their quarrels, when at the time he had sincerely believed himself in the right.

Should he go back to her, and admit that he had been wrong?

Never! The memory of that last day was too clear in his mind. The words she had spoken in the heat of her anger had burned themselves into his soul, and could not be forgotten. Waring straightened in the saddle, and the hot blood rushed to his face. He wondered now that he had been able to answer her so calmly. He recalled every word he had said:—

"Your words convince me that we cannot live together any longer. I will neither forget nor forgive them. I am going away. Good-bye forever."

"That was all. Without another word he had left her, to come out here to the loneliest spot he could find, and plunge into its strange life in the vain effort to forget."

He pulled down the dripping brim of his cowboy hat to shelter his face from the stinging wind, and resolutely turned his thought in other directions. He speculated vaguely on the condition of his considerable property, and wondered indifferently how his agents were managing it. His friends at the club—did they miss him? From then his thoughts strayed to the strange message he had received the day previous, and he began to puzzle his brain in an effort to decide who had sent it and what it could mean. It was an ordinary postcard, its peculiarity consisting in the fact that the communication on the back was composed not of words, but music—four measures in the key of G. This was the message:—



He had hummed the notes over and over, and though they had a strangely familiar sound, yet he could not place the fragment, nor even determine the composer. His failure to decipher the enigma annoyed him. It had a meaning of that he was convinced, but what could it be? Who could have sent it?

Waring began to sing to pass the time, and his rich baritone rang out above the sleeping herd.

Suddenly, while in the midst of a passage from one of the great works of a master composer, he stopped short in surprise. He was singing the

notes on the card! It had come to him like a flash. He tore open his inner coat and drew the postcard from his 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.

Calling up with a jerk that almost lifted the iron-jawed bruno 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 an' twenty miles. You're crazy."

Waring fairly stamped in his impatience.

"It's only sixty to Bowden," 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 anyone 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. Some 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. Hi there! Some o' you boys round up the jumps 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 and astride of the magnificent animal, and was off on his long ride.

The long, packing 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, they went, leaving mile after mile of prairie road behind them. At last there was only five miles between him and Bowden.

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 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 with the muzzle of the revolver he carried, the officer rode closer 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."

Overjoyed 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 smoke began to come in heavy puffs from the funnel of the engine, and the line of cars moved slowly away from the station. Then it was that Star showed the spirit that was in him. He bounded forward and swept down upon the town like a whirlwind.

The road ran for a mile, beside the rails, as level as a floor. The train was gathering speed with every revolution of the wheels, but Star was gaining at every jump.

Waring, with eyes fixed and jaw set, was riding desperately. Thirty feet! The spectators in the doorway of the last car gazed breathlessly. Twenty feet—and Star straining every nerve and muscle in his body. Only five feet now! Inch by inch he crawled up. He was abreast of the platform! Swerving his flying horse closer to the track, Waring leaped over, and grasping the railings with both hands, lifted himself from the saddle, kicked his feet from the stirrups, and swung over to the steps of the car.

After calmly accepting the enthusiastic congratulations of the passengers who had witnessed his dramatic boarding of the train, Waring dropped into a seat, with a sigh of relief, and was soon lost in thought. He was roused from his reverie by a touch on the arm, and turned, to find the conductor standing beside him. He reached into his pocket for the required cash. His fingers encountered nothing more valuable than a knife and some matches. The other pockets were equally unproductive. Then he remembered, with a shock, that he had put his money in his little bundle, at that moment firmly attached to his saddle, some miles to the rear.

It was maddening. There was nothing to do but throw himself on the mercy of the man in the blue uniform. That person heard his excuse with a impassive face, and merely announced that he would have to get off at the next station. This was not

Christmas Cakes and Cookies

Plain Foundation Cake— $\frac{1}{2}$ cupful shortening, $\frac{1}{2}$ cupful sugar, 1 egg, $\frac{1}{2}$ cupful milk or water, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoonful salt, 3 teaspoonfuls baking powder, 1 teaspoonful vanilla, $1\frac{1}{2}$ cupfuls flour. Cream the butter and the sugar thoroughly, then add the well-beaten egg. 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 eggs, 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 Cakes: 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 brush 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 chopped beef suet, 1 cupful brown sugar, 1 cupful seeded raisins, 1 cupful currants, $\frac{1}{2}$ cupful finely cut citron, $\frac{1}{2}$ cupful finely cut figs, 1 tablespoonful candied lemon peel, 1 tablespoonful candied orange peel, 1 tablespoonful salt, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoonful cinnamon, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoonful cloves, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoonful ginger.

at all in accordance with Waring's plans, and he endeavored to impress upon the conductor the importance of his being in Calgary that evening.

He grew desperate. Was his ride after all to be fruitless? He remembered his reason for haste, and decided to take the conductor into his confidence. Leaning over, he whispered something quickly into his ear, and ended by showing him the postcard. At first the man looked incredulous, but a glance at Waring's earnest face reassured him. His expression softened, and he handed back the card with a sigh.

"I reckon I'll have to fix it for you, but the only way I can do it is to pay your fare out of my own pocket. I'll do that, and you can send me the money. It's three-sixty." He wrote his name and address upon a slip, which he gave to Waring.

The car wheels were still turning when he strode through Calgary station, jumped into a cab, and was driven to the nearest drug store, where he consulted a directory.

"237 Bellevue Avenue," he cried, as he re-entered the vehicle. Arriving at his destination, he sprang out, and, saying "Wait," ran the steps of a handsome residence.

To the servant who opened the door, he said: "I wish to see Mr. Foster. My name is Waring. I have a card with me."

The servant politely ushered him into the reception-room, saying that he would see if Mr. Foster was in. Apparently he was, for he appeared almost immediately, the personification of keen-eyed, well-groomed finance.

"What can I do for you, Mr.—" Waring?—

That young man took in every detail of his appearance, and he realized that he had a hard-headed man of business to deal with.

"Mr. Foster," he said, "you are the manager of the Calgary Dominion Bank, which, I believe, handles the Western interests of the Sterling Bank of Toronto."

The other bowed, and Waring continued:—

"I have an account at the Sterling, and I want you to cash a cheque for me. It is after banking hours, I know, and even if it were not, I have no immediate means of identification."

The banker's features stiffened perceptibly, but Waring went on:—

"It is of the greatest importance that I take the eastern express to-night, or I would not come to you in this irregular way—"

"One moment, Mr. Waring. Pardon me for interrupting you, but what you ask is impossible, as you should know. My advice to you is to wire your bank for the money."

Waring broke in impatiently:—

"Of course, I know that I can do that, but it means a day's delay, and that is what I want to avoid. I am willing to pay any amount within rea-

THE FAITH OF DANDY JIM

The Countess Dolliena, 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 wear the Christmas carols, only her father told her it was better to leave her new doll at home."

Countess Dolliena continued to stare at poor, ragged Dandy Jim. He lay limply upon his small bed in the corner of the nursery. His face looked thin and sad.

"I said that Elizabeth already prefers me, Dandy Jim!" the countess said tauntingly.

"That was too much!" Dandy Jim could stand no more. "Wait and see!" he cried. "Wait and see!" Five long years Elizabeth has held me close in her arms all night. Five long years she has played with me at least part of every day. Christmas is an exciting time. Your clothes certainly do look far nicer than mine, and you are extremely pretty. I see just why she has forgotten me for a few days. I shall be right here till she takes me again in her arms—for take me the certain will."

"Ha!" laughed the countess cruelly. "Then you will be there the rest of your life."

Dandy Jim pressed his lips tight together. He knew that if he spoke at all he would utter rude and angry words, such words that he would deserve to be the rest of his life upon his bed, forgotten for all time by his adored little mistress.

Late that night he was awakened by a terrible crash! The wind, which was howling wildly, had banged the outside door. The windows rattled and the whole house shook. Dandy Jim longed to run to Elizabeth's room. He wished to comfort her, for he knew how much she disliked loud noises in the middle of the night. With a sigh he remembered that she had chosen the Countess Dolliena. She did not want him—yet.

Suddenly the nursery door flew open with a bang. A tiny electric flash light shone straight into his blinking eyes. A dear, dear voice cried, "O Dandy Jim, Dandy Jim, I need you!"

A little girl in a white nightdress rushed to his bed, and clasped him in her soft, warm arms. She hurried through the dark halls hung with Christmas greens, and she murmured as she went:

"Oh! Dandy dear, the countess was very beautiful to look at, very beautiful to walk and to talk with. Each night I sat her in a chair near my bed, where I would not miss her clothes, but where I could see her the first thing every morning when I opened my eyes. She looked so dressed up, Dandy Jim—so wonderful! But she shrieked at all. The house trembled, and Elizabeth jumped back into her warm bed, with Dandy Jim hugged close in her arms. She whispered:—

"But, Dandy dear, when it comes to storms and to winds there's no one in the world like you. My dear old, faithful friend—my Dandy Jim!"

At Christmas.

At Christmastide the emrive 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.

At Christmastide an angel leaves The door ajar a little space,
 And peace and joy and charity beam on us from the Shining Place.
 And you, I think, slip through the door,
 Drawn by the well-remembered days,
 The silent house breathes out again
 The blessing of your quiet ways.
 At Christmas.

At Christmastide old friends estranged Renew their long-forgotten ties;
 "Peace and goodwill," the angels' song In benediction from the skies,
 And you—for what can hinder love?
 I think you leave the Happy Host
 And come with comfort, for you know
 This is the time we miss you most,
 At Christmas.

On the Taking of Jerusalem.

(By the British, December, 1917.)
 The march is o'er,
 The day is done,
 The Cross against
 The Crescent has won.
 In its dazzling light
 They cannot stay:
 Ye of Allah
 Away, away!
 The Cross returns
 To the land of its birth,
 Rajioze, ye peoples,
 Throughout the earth;
 And ye of Allah,
 Kneel to pray
 At the Cross of Christ
 This Christmas Day.

The reign of Self will end when men shall heed
 Less what they Oath than what they
 Lose through Greed.