

SPANGLES ON THE FIRST CHRISTMAS TREE

BY LORRAINE BALLANTYNE

This story is told of how spangles came to be draped upon the Christmas trees: Long years ago, before little boys and girls even thought of having a tree trimmed for Christmas, there lived in a large house on the top of a bleak hill some little boys and girls with their parents and the servants of the home. Their father had gone on a long journey, and they were not sure that he would return in time for the Yule festivities. However, they watched daily for him with their little faces pressed close to the latticed window.

As they looked out they saw nothing but the wide sweeps of snow, broken only by the scattered spruce and cedar trees standing here and there like sentinels upon the landscape. Suddenly they got the idea that they would like to have one of the trees in the house, to light their Christmas candles upon its branches. So they ran to their mother and asked her if they might do this, and after thinking about it for a few minutes she agreed that it was a pretty thought and said they might have the tree. So she called the servants and told them that the house must be cleaned from the outer doors up to the attic, and not a speck of dust must remain, for the children were going to light a tree with candles to honor the birthday of the Christ-child.

The servants started cleaning the house, and they began right up at the attic. They cleaned and brushed and swept every atom of dirt out, and every little cobweb from every little corner. Then they came downstairs and again they cleaned and brushed every bit of dirt and every little cobweb from every corner. And hidden away among the little cobwebs were many little spiders, and one by one they were swept out with the dust, until at the end of the week there remained not a single little spider in all the house, nor a speck of dust, nor a cobweb.

Then with great ceremony the oldest servant was despatched to select the most beautiful tree of perfect proportions, and it was cut down, and brought into the house. When made fast, candles were brought, and the little boys and girls spent a most delightful day fixing them upon the tree.

They did not tie one here and another there—oh no! Each one was placed carefully so as to be just a certain distance from the last, so that when lighted the whole tree would appear to be a wonderful harmonious blaze of light. At the very top of the tree, fastened to the highest twig which pointed straight up to Heaven, they fastened the tallest and best candle. It was late when they finished, and they were all tired, so they went to bed, after opening the window just a teeny weeny bit so that Santa Claus might be able to get in, when attracted by the brilliant lights, if he considered their conduct had been good enough during the year to merit reward.

The household was soon asleep, and at midnight no one save the dog in his kennel heard the exquisite tinkling of bells which rang out upon the clear frosty air, when Santa Claus drew up with his magic sleigh before the window. Softly he entered the house and tip-toed first to the room where the children slept to see if they were all abed and sleeping soundly. Not even a little mouse was awake so that Santa Claus might be able to get in, when attracted by the brilliant lights, if he considered their conduct had been good enough during the year to merit reward.

When he had gone and the last tinkle of his bells died away on the crisp frosty air, the moonbeams crept softly in to see the tree. And the little birds awakened by the jingle of bells came out of the trees and looked in through the window to behold the tree. And all the little spiders which had been swept out, and had been huddling together in the depths of a balsam tree outside, were disturbed by the commotion of the birds, and they too opened their tiny eyes and saw the tree glowing with a blaze of light inside the window.

"Oh what a pretty thing!" sighed one little spider.

"Let us go closer to see it," urged another.

"Come along," ventured a third.

So all the little spiders ran down from the tree, and hurried across the snow so as not to get their tiny feet frozen, and they ran up the wall to the window. There they sat a long time lost in amazement at the extraordinary sight.

Suddenly one of them said, "The moonbeams have gone inside; let us go in, too."

So they all ran in through the window, for Santa Claus had forgotten to close it. After being swept out, there they were, every last one of them, back inside the house again.

One fellow more venturesome than the rest wanted to go right up into the tree to discover why it should have bright star-lights flickering upon it while the trees outside had no such warm glow about them. The older spiders decided that might be a bit dangerous, but the more adventurous ones argued that the moonbeams were already playing in the tree, and no harm had come to them.

So up they all went and examined it to their hearts' content, running over every branch, but always weaving a silky thread as they went, that they might have a trail to follow back, so

as not to lose their way. They crept up the candles very close to the flame and let the warmth of the glow penetrate their bodies, and it felt very good. Then one old-father spider said, "Come, children, let us go before we are swept out again." They thought that very good advice and one by one they all followed their silken trail back again to the window, and out they went, down the wall and back again to their new home in the balsam tree.

Soon after that the star which the Wise Men had followed years before appeared in the sky, and the Christ-child came to earth again to discover where the children dwelt who loved Him. He saw the bright lights from afar on the tree which was trimmed to do honor to His birthday, and He came and stood in the room to behold it. He was so surprised to find it covered with tiny cobwebs, and although He loves every creature, even the tiny spiders, yet He knew the children did not mean to have them on the tree.

So He touched the silken webs with His finger, touched them ever so gently, and let the tree good covered from top to bottom with glittering silver spangles—the most beautiful tree in the world! And because the story of it spread afar, to this day we still hang spangles upon the Christmas Tree.

The Christmas Tree's Toilette.

Before attempting to dress a Christmas tree it should be made very firm by placing the plant in a barrel of soil or sand if it is of any size. Even if the tree is a small one it is advisable to do this, although in such case a large flower-pot will serve the purpose.

The dressing of the tree should always be started from the top, working downwards. Fix the heaviest toys to the upper parts of the strongest branches and suspend the more fragile ornaments from the tips. There should be no happy-go-lucky distributing of the gifts, but even the smallest toy should be labelled for some child. This not only makes more fun, but there is a finality about such an arrangement that does away with all jealousy.

After the Christmas tree is dismantled plant it at once, if you have a garden and the tree has roots. But many Christmas trees have no roots. In that case let the children have them to prepare for the birds. They may be decked with morsels of fat and a few partly shelled nuts. Our feathered friends are hard put to it at this time of year to find enough food, and the children will love to know they are giving the birds a party of their own.

If you have some time to spare for decorating, don't forget that delightful Christmas friezes may be bought at most big stores in three-yard lengths. One design may show Father Christmas tearing through the snow with his sleigh and merry bells, another a happy family of kiddies dancing round the Christmas tree, and there are many other artistic designs, all charmingly colored with out being crude. These are in so much better taste than the old colored paper chains and the paper roses in impossible shades.

These friezes should only be fixed in place here and there with small drawing-pins, so that no ugly marks show in the walls when the decorations are taken down.

The best kind of Christmas cake for children is one of the plain variety, iced with water icing. It may be decorated with the little gold and silver balls, candied flower petals, and other little decorations sold at all confectioners for the purpose.

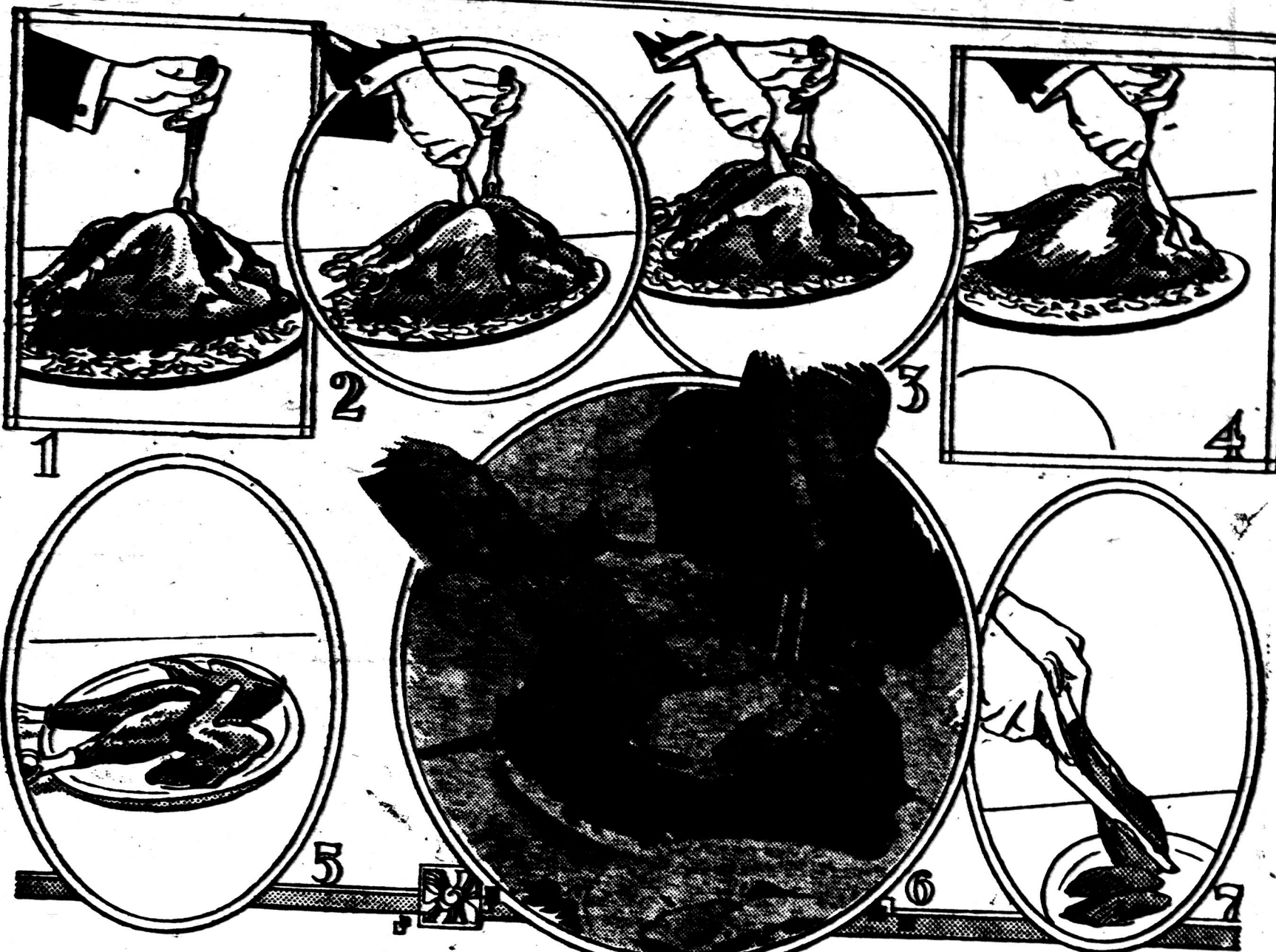
Decorations will decorate several cakes and make them look so Christmassy that they will give far more pleasure to the children than a rich cake not so prettily decorated. A rich fruit unsuitable for children, especially at Christmas-time, when there is so much rich food about. If children are allowed to overeat it will spoil the fun for everybody.



Christmas boxes originated in Roman times, when an altar was erected in every village, and people put money in a box. On the day after Christmas Day the money was distributed.

How To Carve The Christmas Turkey

A Few Tips for Father, Which if Followed, Will Give Mother a Chance to Enjoy Her Dinner Too



Each of the Sketches Above Show a Step in the Correct Procedure for Carving a Turkey. The Accompanying Story Tells You How in Detail.

By Sister Mary

After mother has roasted the Christmas turkey to a turn, it is up to father to take a hand and wrack the work of art to enhance it, according to his skill at carving.

Every woman has sat with bated breath the first time the man of the house wielded a carving knife over a turkey. Since no ordinary man carves a turkey every day here's just how it should be done.

First, be sure that the carving knife is sharp. A dull knife will mean trouble and consequent embarrassment.

If an unusually large turkey platter is used, well and good, if not, a small platter should be at hand for the

wings, thighs and drumsticks.

The platter should be so placed that the breast of the turkey will be at the left hand of the carver. This is important.

Follow Instructions.

As in illustration No. 1, insert the carving fork firmly midway of the breast bone, plunging it deep. The fork must balance the turkey on the platter while the disjointing and carving of the breast is accomplished.

No. 2. Make a sharp downward cut through the skin between the second joint and the body on the side of the turkey farthest from the carver. Cut through the flesh and skin all the way around the joint.

No. 3. With the point of the knife find the socket, then with a quick outward turn of the blade the thigh is severed from the back. This removes both of the leg joints at one time.

No. 4. The procedure in No. 3 is followed to remove the wings, cutting straight down between the wing and the body.

No. 5. The legs and wings should be placed on a side plate for carving later.

No. 6. With the fork still firmly grasped in the left hand, cut the breast in thin slices, beginning where the wing was removed and slicing parallel to the breast bone.

No. 7. Now remove the fork from the socket, then with a quick outward turn of the blade the thigh is severed from the back. This removes both of the leg joints at one time.

To Remove Stuffing. To remove the stuffing, make a sharp incision through the skin and serve with a large spoon.

Unless a very large party is being served only one side of the turkey is carved for the first serving of plates. After the plates are served the turkey is turned cut side down against the platter and the carving knife and fork are placed together across the end of the platter until needed.

The Champion Pie Eater.

A mammoth Christmas pie was sent from Berwick to London in 1770 as a gift for Sir Harry Grey. It measured 9 ft. in circumference, and weighed 168 lbs.

An enormous pie of similar weight provided the chief dish at a banquet at Gorleston some years ago. It was built in three sections, and walled in with a stout crust 3 ins. thick. The ingredients consisted of kidneys, beef-steak, and rabbits, mingled with potatoes, onions, and carrots.

This monster pie was made by an old tawdry skipper and took forty-eight hours to cook. After the feast the remains of the pie were made into ten gallons of soup for distribution to the poor.

When the pie-eating championship of New Jersey was decided, each pie consisted of a layer of pastry 1/4-inch thick, spread with canned fruit. The average weight of the pies was 1/2 lb.

Thirty-five young men entered the contest, during which the State record of twenty-six pies in half-an-hour went by the board, for the winner managed to eat twenty-seven in the allotted time. For this feat he was awarded the championship belt.

God Be Praised.

Now God be praised,
The years are long,
The winds of time
Blow loud and strong,
But still our hearts can catch afar
The shining of a star.
Come storm, come change,
We listen still
To angels singing on a hill,
And Christmas never falls amiss—
Now God be praised for this.
—Nancy Byrd Turner.



I sent my message up into the sky
To the millions of stars shining on high;
They promised me they'd look down, from
above,
At this Christmas time on the friends I love,
To scatter my wishes of Christmas cheer,
That will last through a joyous, glad New
Year.
—M. C. G.



Christmas Comes Again.

Once again we welcome in the happy
Christmas time,
Hopefully we listen to the joy-bells'
merry chime;
How their happy clamor seems to
banish grief and pain,
Chiming "Joy be with you, for old
Christmas comes again."

Once again we gather round the yule-
log's cheery blaze,
Happily on all the faces dear to us
we gaze;
As the sparks fly upward, we can hear
the bells' refrain:
"Love and Peace be with you, for old
Christmas comes again."

Whistling winds and snow-wreaths
cannot reach the ingle-side,
Home, sweet home, is sweeter now,
where love and joy abide;
From each happy homestead, as the
bells sing their refrain,
Send forth Peace and Goodwill, for
old Christmas comes again.
—Alice Wise.



Christmas Time.
Moth—"How nice, Santa has left a
nice lighted candle for me to sit
around!"

A good conscience is a continual
Christmas.—Franklin.

CAROL, SWEETLY CAROL!

Stories of Our Christmas Songs.

Few of the people to whom "Good King Wenceslas" is familiar know that it is set to the tune of "Tempus aeternitatis," a Spring carol of the thirteenth century.

Still less generally known is the curious story of "Adestes, fideles" ("Come! all ye faithful"). It was first sung in England at the old chapel of the Sardinian Embassy in London, where it was heard by the Duke of Leeds, who, imagining it to be peculiar to the Portuguese service, introduced it at a concert of ancient music under the title of "The Portuguese Hymn."

Soon afterwards it was sung—for the first time in Scotland—at the Christmas service in St. Andrew's Chapel, Glasgow. Errand boys, it is said, whistled it in the streets, and the very blackbirds in the squares joined in the chorus.

Written for His Daughter.

It is, however, not peculiar to the country after which it is named, but is known throughout the Roman Catholic Church. It probably belongs to the Latin hymnody of France about the end of the seventeenth century.

"Christians, awake!" is another carol with a romantic history. At Christmas, 1745, its author, John Byrom, who lived at Kersall, a few miles from Manchester, fulfilled a promise he had made to his little daughter to "write something nice for Christmas—something that was to be 'all for herself.'" She found on her plate, when she came down for breakfast, a tiny sheet of notepaper, on which was written the now famous carol, "Christians, awake!"

The tune to it was composed not long afterwards by the leader of Kersall church choir, who sang the carol on Christmas Eve a few years later under the windows of Byrom's house. A romance is also connected with "Hark! the herald angels sing." It is

stated that while Charles Wesley, to whom we are indebted for it, was on his way to church one Christmas morning, he was so much impressed by hearing the bells ringing that he said—

Hark! how all the welkin rings
Glory to the King of kings.

But, though his popular carol may have originated thus, he actually wrote it, not under the gloomy winter skies of England, but amid the sunbaked plantations of Georgia.

It was, moreover, a happening at sea that turned his thoughts to hymn-writing. The vessel in which he and his brother left England was struck by a storm that nearly overwhelmed it. Perilous as was the situation, a number of the passengers—Moravians—gathered together on deck and calmly sang the hymns of their country. This so impressed the Wesleys that both turned hymn-writers on landing in Georgia.

The opening lines of the carol in Charles Wesley's MS. are identical with those attributed to him on his hearing the Christmas bells, and they are so printed in "Hymns, Ancient and Modern." But the general form is—

Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King.

Who made the alteration is not known.

Some collections of carols contain more than one thousand, including numbers of great antiquity. There is in existence a carol of the fourth century, but the oldest printed collections in England are those by Wynkyn de Worde, 1521.

Christmas Birthday Beliefs.

In many countries of the world there still exists a belief that people born on Christmas Day have the power of healing by the "laying on of hands," and also possess second sight. There are several other superstitions connected with "Christmas children," one of which is that they are able to excel in music. They are also credited with possessing abnormal intelligence.

In the South of England many folks believe that boys born on Christmas Day are destined to become clergymen, while the girls ought to become nurses. It is supposed that they will succeed in these occupations. Should they decide not to follow them, however, their lives will be dismal failures.

"This day shall change all griefs and sorrows into love."—Shakespeare.

