

In the US, gifts are now exchanged on Christmas Day in a sort of compromise of Dutch, German, and British gift-giving customs. The Christmas tree is a Christianized pagan custom that originated in Germany. German settlers introduced it in America.

### A Transaction in Boot-Blacking

At the Denver station Lin McLean passed through the shootings and omnibuses, and came to the beginning of Seventeenth Street, where is the first saloon. A customer was ordering Hot Scotch; and because he liked the smell and had not thought of the mixture for a number of years, Lin took Hot Scotch. Coming out upon the pavement, he looked across and saw a saloon opposite with brighter globes and windows more prosperous. That should ' have been his choice; lemon-peel would undoubtedly be fresher over there; and over he went at once. to begin the whole thing properly. In such frozen weather no drink could be more timely, and

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he sat, to enjoy without haste its mellow fitness. Once again on the pavement, he looked along the street towards up-town beneath the crisp, cold electric lights, and three little bootblacks gathered where he stood, and cried, "Shine? Shine?" at him. Remembering that you took the third turn to the right to get the best dinner in Denver, Lin hit on the skillful plan of stopping at all Hot Scotches between; but the next occurred within a few yards, and it was across the street. This one being attained and appreciated, he found that he must cross back again or skip number four. At this rate he would not be dining in time to see much of the theatre, and he stopped to consider. It was a German place he had just quitted, and a huge light poured out on him from its window, which the proprietor's fatherland sentiment had made into a show. Lights shone among a well-set pine forest, where beery, jovial gnomes sat on roots and reached upward to Santa Claus; he, grinning, fat, and Teutonic, held in his right hand forever a foaming glass, and forever in his left a string of sausages that dangled down among the



During World War II it was necessary for Americans to mail Christmas gifts early for the troops in Europe to receive them in time. Merchants joined in the effort to remind the public to shop and mail early and the protracted shopping season was born.

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gnomes. With his American back to this, the cow-puncher, wearing the same serious, absent face he had not changed since he ran a way from himself at Cheyenne, considered carefully the Hot Scotch question and which side of the road to take and stick to, while the little bootblacks found him once more, and cried, "Shine? Shine?" monotonous as snowbirds. He settled to stay over here with the southside Scotches, and, the little, one-note song reaching his attention, he suddenly shoved his foot at the nearest boy, who lightly sprang away.

"Dare you to touch him!" piped a snowbird, dangerously. They were in short trousers, and the eldest enemy, it may be, was ten.

"Don't hit me," said Mr. McLean. "I'm innocent!"

"Well, you leave him be," said one. "What's he layin' to kick you for, Billy? 'Tain't yer pop, is it?"

"Naw!" said Billy, in scorn. "Father never kicked me. Don't know who he is.

He's a special!" shrilled the leading bird, sensationally. "He's got a badge, and he's going to arrest yet."



Straight from the North Pole, Santa's Express will be chugging into town with plenty to "choo choo" on. Inside the train compartment are Russell Stover boxed candy, Russell Stover Carmel Santa, Russell Stover solid chocolate balls, and a plush character (Note - Snoopy plush shown, but characters may vary). The reusable metal train will make a great Christmas decoration for many years to come. (Arrangement is 17" high x 13" wide and contains 20-22 candy stems.)

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Two of them hopped instantly to the safe middle of the street, and scattered with practiced strategy; but Billy stood his ground. "Dare you to arrest me!" said he.

"What'll you give me not to?" inquired Lin, and he put his hands in his pockets, arms akimbo.

"Nothing; I've done nothing," announced Billy, firmly. But even in the last syllable his voice suddenly failed, a terror filled his eyes, and he, too, sped into the middle of the street.

"What's he claim you fifted?" inquired the leader, with eagerness. "Tell him you haven't been inside a store to-day. We can prove it!" they screamed to the special officer.

"Say," said the slow-spoken Lin from the pavement, "you're poor judges of a badge, you fellows."

His tone pleased them where they stood, wide apart from each other.

Mr. McLean also remained stationary

in the bluish illumination of the window. "Why, if any policeman was caught wearin' this here," said he, following his sprightly invention, "he'd get arrested himself."

This struck them extremely. They began to draw together, Billy lingering the last.

"If it's your idea," pursued Mr. McLean, alluringly, as the three took cautious steps nearer the curb, "that blue, clasped hands in a circle of red stars gives the bearer the right to put forks in the jug – why, I'll get somebody else to black my boots for a dollar."

The three made a swift rush, fell on simultaneous knees, and, clattering their boxes down, began to spit in an industrious circle.

"Easy!" wheedled Mr. McLean and they looked up at him, staring and fascinated. "Not having three feet," said the cow-puncher, always grave and slow, "I can only give two this here job."

"He's got a big pistol and a belt! "exulted the leader, who had precociously felt beneath Lin's coat.

"You're a smart boy," said Lin, considering him, "and yu' find a man out right away. Now you stand off and tell me all about myself while they fix the boots - and a dollar goes to the quickest through."

Young Billy and his tow-headed competitor flattened down, each to a boot, with all their might, while the leader ruefully contemplated Mr. McLean.

"That's a Colt forty-five you've got." ventured he.

"Right again. Some day, maybe, you'll be wearing one of your own, if the angels don't pull yu' before you're ripe."

"I'm through!" sang out Towhead, rising in haste.

Small Billy was struggling still, but leaped at that, the two heads bobbing to a level together; and Mr. McLean, looking down, saw that the arrangement had not been a good one for the boots.

"Will you kindly referee," said he, forgivingly, to the leader, "and decide which of them smears is the awfulest?"

But the leader looked the other way and played upon a mouth-organ.

"Well, that saves me money:" said Mr. McLean, jingling his pocket. "I guess you've both won." He handed each of them a dollar. "Now," he continued, "I just dassent show these boots up-town; so this time it's a dollar for the best shine."

The two went palpitating at their brushes again, and the leader played his mouthorgan with brilliant unconcern. Lin, tall and brooding, leaned against the jutting sill of the window, a figure somehow plainly strange in town, while through the bright plate-glass Santa Claus, holding out his beer and sausages, perpetually beamed.

Billy was laboring gallantly, but it was labor, the cow-puncher perceived, and Billy no seasoned expert. "See here," said Lin, stooping, "I'll show yu' how it's done. He's playin' that toon cross-eyed enough to steer anybody crooked. There. Keep your blacking soft and work with a dry brush."

"Lemme," said Billy, "I've got to learn." So he finished the boot his own way with wiry determination, breathing and re-polishing; and this event was also adjudged a dead heat, with results gratifying to both parties. So here was their work done, and more money in their pockets than from all the other boots and shoes of this day; and Towhead and Billy did not wish for further trade, but to spend this handsome fortune as soon as might be. Yet they delayed in the brightness of the window, drawn by curiosity near this new kind of man whose voice held them and whose remarks dropped them into constant uncertainty. Even the omitted leader had been unable to go away and nurse his pride alone.

"Is that a secret society?" inquired Towhead, lifting a finger at the badge.

Mr. McLean nodded. "Turruble," said he. "You're a Wells Fargo detective," asserted the leader.

"Play your harp," said Lin.

"Are you a-a desperaydo" whispered Towhead.

"Oh, my!" observed Mr. McLean, sadly; "what has our Jack been readin'"

"He's a cattle-man!" cried Billy. "I've seen his heels."

"That's you" said the discovered puncher, with approval. "You'll do. But I bet you can't tell me what we wearers of this badge have sworn to do this night."

At this they craned their necks and glared at him.

"We – are - sworn (don't yu' jump, now, and give me away) – sworn – to - blow off three bootblacks to a dinner." "Ah, pshaw!" They backed away, bristling with distrust.

"That's the oath, fellows. Yu' may as well make your minds up - for I have it to do!"

"Dare you to! Ah!"

"And after dinner it's the Opera-house, to see 'The Children of Captain Grant!'"

They screamed shrilly at him, keeping off beyond the curb.

"I can't waste my time on such smart "boys," said Mr. McLean, rising to his full height from the window-sill. "I am going, somewhere to find boys that ain't so turruble quick stampeded by a roast turkey."

He began to lounge slowly away, serious as he had been throughout, and they, stopping their noise short, swiftly picked up their boxes and followed him. Some change in the current of electricity that fed the window disturbed its sparkling light,

so that Santa Claus, with his arms stretched out behind the departing cowpuncher, seemed to be smiling more broadly from the midst of his flickering brilliance.