



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Christmas Cake

Maud Lindsay

It was a joyful day for the McMulligan children when Mrs. McMulligan made the Christmas cake. There were raisins to seed and eggs to beat and pans to scrape, and every one of the children, from the oldest to the youngest, helped to stir the batter when all the good things were mixed together.

"Oh, mix it, and stir it, and stir it and taste;
For ev'rything's in it, and nothing to waste;
And ev'ry one's helped — even Baby — to make
The nice, brown, sugary Christmas cake!"

said Mrs. McMulligan, as she poured the batter into the cake pan.

The Baker who lived at the corner was to bake the Christmas cake, so Joseph, the oldest boy, made haste to carry it to him. All the other children followed along, and together they went — oh, so carefully — out of the front door, down the sidewalk, straight to the shop where the Baker was waiting.

The Baker's face was so round and so jolly that the McMulligan children thought he must look just like Santa Claus. He could bake the whitest bread and the lightest cake, and as soon as the children spotted him they began to call:

"The cake is all ready! 'Tis here in the pan —
Now bake it, good Baker, as fast as you can!"

"No, no," said the Baker. "It would be a mistake
To hurry in baking the Christmas cake.
I'll not bake it fast, and I'll not bake it slow —
My little round clock on the wall there will show
How long I must watch and how long I must bake
The nice, brown, sugary Christmas cake."

The little round clock hung on the wall above the oven. Its face was so bright and its tick so merry, and it was busy night and day telling the Baker when to sleep and when to eat and when to do his baking. When the McMulligan children looked at it, it was just striking ten, and it seemed to say very plainly:

"'Tis just the right time for the Baker to bake
The nice, brown, sugary Christmas cake!"



The oven was ready, and the Baker wasted no time putting the cake in.

"Ho, ho!" he cried merrily. "Now isn't this fun?
'Tis ten o'clock, and the baking's begun —
And tickity, tickity, when it strikes one,
If nothing should hinder, the cake will be done!"

Then the McMulligan children ran home to tell their mother what he had said, and the Baker went on with his work. It was the day before Christmas, and a great many people came to his shop to buy pies and cakes — but no matter how busy he was waiting on customers, he never forgot the McMulligans' cake, and every time he glanced at the clock, it reminded him to peek into the oven.

So well did he watch it, and so carefully did he bake it, that the cake was done on the stroke of one, just as he had promised. He had scarcely taken it out of the oven when the shop door flew open and in came the McMulligan children, every one of them calling:

"The clock has struck one! The clock has struck one!
We waited to hear it — and is the cake done?"

When they saw it, they agreed it was the nicest, brownest, spiciest cake that had ever been baked in a Baker's oven. The Baker himself said it was a beautiful cake, and if you had been at the McMulligans' on Christmas Day, I am sure you would have thought so too.

Joseph carried it home, walking very slowly and carefully, and all the other children followed him — out of the Baker's shop, down the sidewalk, straight home where Mrs. McMulligan was waiting at the window. When they spotted her smiling at them, they all began to call:

"Hurrah for our Mamma! She surely can make
The nicest and spiciest Christmas cake!

Hurrah for the Baker! Hurrah for the fun!
Hurrah for our Christmas cake — now it is done!"

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