

The Three Trees



Once upon a mountaintop, three little trees stood and dreamed of what they wanted to become when they grew up.

The first little tree looked up at the stars and said: "I want to hold treasure. I want to be covered with gold and filled with precious stones. I'll be the most beautiful treasure chest in the world!"

The second little tree looked out at the small stream trickling by on its way to the ocean. "I want to travel mighty waters and carry powerful kings. I'll be the strongest ship in the world!"

The third little tree looked down into the valley below where busy men and women worked in a busy town. "I don't want to leave the mountaintop at all. I want to grow so tall that when people stop to look at me, they'll raise their eyes to Heaven and think of God. I will be the tallest tree in the world."

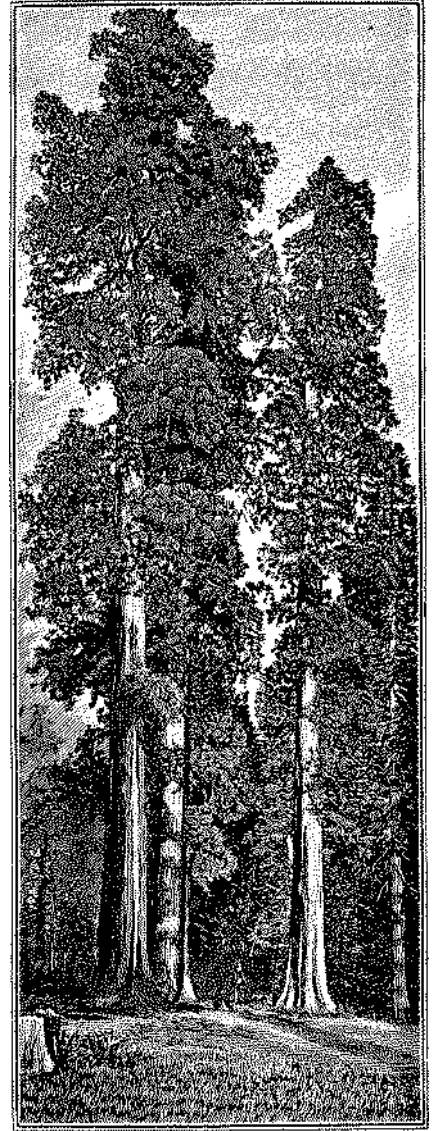
Years passed. The rain came, the sun shone, and the little trees grew tall. One day three woodcutters climbed the mountain. The first woodcutter looked at the first tree and said, "This tree is beautiful. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his shining ax, the first tree fell.

"Now I shall be made into a beautiful chest! I shall hold wonderful treasures!" the first tree said.

The second woodcutter looked at the second tree and said, "This tree is strong. It is perfect for me." With a swoop of his shining ax, the second tree fell.

"Now I shall sail mighty waters!" thought the second tree. "I shall be a strong ship for great kings!"

The third tree felt her heart sink when the last woodcutter looked her way. She stood straight, tall, and pointed bravely to Heaven. But the



woodcutter never even looked up. "Any kind of tree will do for me," he muttered. With a swoop of his shining ax, the third tree fell.

The first tree rejoiced when the woodcutter brought her to a carpenter's shop. But the carpenter fashioned the tree into a feed box for animals. The once beautiful tree was not covered with gold, or with treasure. She was coated with sawdust and filled with hay for hungry farm animals.

The second tree smiled when the woodcutter took her to a shipyard, but no mighty sailing ship was made that day. Instead the once strong tree was hammered and sawed into a simple fishing boat. She was too small and too weak to sail an ocean, or even a river. Instead she was taken to a lake.

The third tree was confused when the woodcutter cut her into strong beams and left her in a lumberyard. "What happened?" the once tall tree wondered. "All I ever wanted was to stay on the mountaintop and point to God...."

Many, many days and nights passed and the three trees eventually forgot their dreams.

But one night, golden starlight poured over the first tree as a young woman placed her newborn baby in the feed box. "I wish I could make a cradle for him" her husband whispered. The mother squeezed his hand and smiled as the starlight shone on the smooth and sturdy wood.

"This manger is beautiful," she said. And suddenly the first tree knew he was holding the greatest treasure in the world.

One evening a tired traveler and his friends crowded into the old fishing boat. The traveler fell asleep as

the second tree quietly sailed out into the lake. Soon a thundering and thrashing storm arose. The little tree shuddered. She knew she did not have the strength to carry so many passengers safely in the wind and the rain. The tired man awakened. He stood up, stretched out His hand, and said, "Peace." The storm stopped as quickly as it had begun. And suddenly the second tree knew he was carrying the King of Heaven and Earth.

One Friday morning the third tree was startled when her beams were yanked from the forgotten woodpile. She flinched as she was carried through an angry, jeering crowd. She shuddered when soldiers nailed a man's hands to her. She felt ugly, harsh, and cruel. But three days later, when the sun rose and the earth trembled with joy beneath her, the third tree knew that God's love had changed everything. It had made the third tree strong. And every time people thought of the third tree, they would think of God. That was better than being the tallest tree in the world.

—Author Unknown

