



Making a Jack-o-Lantern

The "FESTIVE," PUMPKIN

By Weldon Fawcett



Just the Proper Size for a Pumpkin Head



Preparing for Halloween

HOW many of us who enjoy the mischievous and mirthful Halloween season ever pause to consider what a debt of gratitude we owe the festive pumpkin in this connection? Nature's golden globe, so symbolic of all the glories of the autumn, is at once the emblem, the ammunition and the inspiration of the mysterious holiday at the end of October. Without the grinning jack-o-lanterns made possible by ye plump pumpkins the October frolic would lose all its zest for juvenile America; without the vivid-hued orbs the Halloween hostess would be at a loss for decorative effects at dinner and party; and, finally, without the wealth of its mellow interior we should be deprived of that supreme delicacy, the pumpkin pie—than which no greater culinary catastrophe for both young and old could be imagined.

It is doubly difficult to imagine how we would get along without the dependable pumpkin, because not within the memory of the oldest inhabitant have we been without these harbingers of the waning year. We can imagine Christmas without a tree illuminated by the tiny electric lamps, or conceive a St. Valentine's day without those convenient and comical post-card valentines, because it was not so many years ago that we knew not these holiday adjuncts. But Halloween without pumpkins—it is too preposterous to give credence even for a moment. It is the pumpkin and its products that give "go" to the Halloween festival. In short, it is what the mistletoe is to Christmas; what the flag is to Memorial day, and what the firecracker is to the Fourth of July. (Beg pardon, you safe and saners).

Pumpkin's Scant Credit.
And yet, like many another indispensable in this unresponsive world, the pumpkin has had scant credit from mankind. To be sure, some homely poet putting into verse the look of things in the afternoon of the year does prate now and then about the "frost on the pumpkin," or something of that sort, but what kind of recognition is that for a vegetable, the very sight of which is enough to make one's mouth water? It ought to have a monument or be publicly commended by Congress. Nothing less. Why

whisper it in shame. Even the department of agriculture, which knows all about every sort of fruit and vegetable and bug, and gets out big and little books on almost all of them, has never printed so much as a word to help us get better acquainted with Mr. Pumpkin, unless it be a few hints for housewives that want to can pumpkins—as though that were the only fit fate for this boon to mankind.

Mystery in History.
But for all that, there is so much mystery about the history and antecedents of the pumpkin—and perhaps this is, after all, in keeping with Halloween stealth—it is known that the pumpkin is of Asiatic origin, and others are always pointing out that pumpkins have been cultivated either as a curiosity or as an article of food in England ever since the year 1579. However, we know that all patriotic Americans and true friends of the pumpkin will support the contention that the pumpkin thrived in America long before it was known in any other part of the world, and was cultivated by the aborigines of North America, who planted it among their maize. And anyway, even if we grant, for the sake of argument, that some other people saw the pumpkin first, we can save our feelings with the knowledge that no other nationality has adopted the vegetable so universally and warmed to it so enthusiastically as have the present-day residents of the New World.

New England's Emblem.
And as for taking seriously the suggestion that the pumpkin ought to be granted the significance of a national insignia, just as it has so often been proclaimed the national flower, it need only be said that this idea is by no means a new one. More than once during the past century persons of some prominence have suggested that the pumpkin be selected as the emblem of New England. In support of the suggestion it is pointed out that nowhere does the pumpkin thrive as in the cornfields of New England, and moreover, the pumpkin was one of the first fruits utilized by the Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth, to ward off starvation during their first, terrible winters in the new land. Speaking of New England pumpkins, we must not ignore the charge made by some grouchy persons that the making of the old-fashioned New England pumpkin pie is a lost art. Certainly no person who is not suffering from dyspepsia ought to have any complaint

to make regarding the pumpkin pies turned out in this day and age, and no doubt the reflection upon latter-day pumpkin pies originated with men who have idealized the kind "that mother used to make."
No one can find fault with the height of the esteem to which the pumpkin is held by young America. In the estimation of boys it vies with hickory nuts and watermelons. Just as the glossy fruit itself rivals or outlasts all other fruit, not even excepting the apples, in braving the chill autumn winds and even challenging the first snows. As for grown-ups, if the pumpkin was harder to produce they might prize it more highly. It is pretty much a parallel case with the dandelion. But then, perhaps it is not human nature to set much store by an edible that can be had in such bountiful measure, for, say, 30 cents and which is so plentiful in many parts of the country that it is fed to the animals on the farm with never a thought of any better fate.

Only One Pumpkin.
Every true friend of the pumpkin must admit that its plebeian name for a royal fruit places it at a disadvantage, and yet that is but one of the troubles incident to its nomenclature. As every person who goes in quest of a pumpkin for Halloween plots can well attest, there is only one form of pumpkin that is worthy the name and the occasion—the shapely orb of joy, round as a ball and with its glossy surface tinted a more vivid orange than the orange fruit can boast. And yet there are people who confuse the only and original, simon-pure pumpkin, with its numerous cousins, none of whom have half its traditions or claims to distinction. Just because the pumpkin belongs to the same general family as the summer and crook-neck squashes, and the common, inedible gourds, is no reason why anybody should confuse them as one and the same thing. Why, even the squashes that approach most nearly to the pumpkin in color lack its symmetry of form.

Make no Specialty.
Just here it may be remarked that we have in America no tillers of the soil who make a specialty of raising pumpkins as they would celery or apples or even melons. There is no "pumpkin king" and no "pumpkin belt," because pumpkins are raised in pretty much all parts of the country. In France, where the pumpkin is a popular article of food, the seeds of the pumpkin are sown in April in a hotbed under glass, and after being carefully nurtured are transplanted to the open air during May. Pumpkins in this country get no such care and attention. Every truck gardener has a greater or less quantity of the vines sandwiched in among his other growing things, and it is an exceptional farmer who does not plant pumpkins extensively in his corn fields. But mighty little heed is paid to the rough-leaved vines between the date of their first appearance above ground and harvest time when the farmer seeks the gleams of gold among the withered corn stalks. Yet for all that American agriculturists pay so little attention to pumpkins this country could carry off all prizes both for magnitude of crop and size of indi-

vidual pumpkins. The champion pumpkin to date was one grown in Colorado a few years ago, and which measured five feet across, and weighed 336 pounds.
The up-to-date Halloween hostess depends more upon pumpkins than she does upon the ice cream, the popcorn, the fudge or any of the other necessities of the frolic at the end of Indian summer. A substitute might be found for any of the eatables, but there is no substitute for the pumpkin as a Halloween decoration. Most of the pumpkins that thus go to add to the jollity of the occasion are the bona fide products of the farm, but of late years make-believe pumpkins have made their appearance at many an entertainment. It is that they fill a special niche in the scheme of things, rather than that they have been required by any shortage of the real pumpkin crop.

How Hostess Does.
The situation may be explained by an example. Your ingenious hostess employs the real pumpkins—halved, or with an opening at the top, or slashed with the outlines of Jack's visage—as shades for the candles that are deemed to give sufficient illumination for such a spooky occasion, but she has miniature pumpkins fastened from colored cardboard as place cards at the supper table, and the favors for the guests are candy boxes in the form of pumpkins and filled with pumpkin-colored candy.
It might be supposed that a Jack-o-lantern is a Jack-o-lantern, and that there is very little difference between the "reincarnated" pumpkins, but any student of this class of sculpture can assure you that there are wide differences that distinguish the different "schools." The boys, whose sole thought is of the impression to be made by the flaming countenance looking out from the pumpkin, bestow all their thought upon the facial features that are to be thrown into relief by the candlelight from inside the pumpkin, whereas the hostess, whose pumpkin sentries are posted in well lighted rooms, is wont to embellish a plain countenance with black or white eyebrows and mustaches and other supposedly life-like touches.

o-lanterns. You will agree that it would not be merely superfluous, but little short of an insult to insert any description of these nocturnal terrors for the timid. By the boy who has not in the halcyon days of his youth openly or surreptitiously carved the grinning teeth, staring eyes, strong nose and expansive ears that vested the placid pumpkin with a sudden ferocity worthy of the most desperate cause. Perhaps it were not well in all cases either to inquire too closely as to just how the pumpkin was acquired. But whatever be the means whereby it was apportioned to its present purpose, it is a safe guess that its selection represents much care and thought and time spent in canvassing the possibilities and qualifications of candidates. For, be it known, the sphere of vegetable gold that is to be toted around with a candle inside to frighten maiden ladies and youngsters in the first or second reader, and the hapless passerby, must come close to certain rigid standards of form and outline. And then, too, it is not advisable to have the "pumpkin head" too big, although that is a temptation, but when he is prone to pick a 40-pound pumpkin, the far-sighted sculptor will recall that a

29-pounder may be much more handy in the event that it is necessary to beat any hasty retreats on the eventful night.
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The Tenderfoot Farmer

It was one of these experimental farmers, who put green spectacles on his cow and fed her shavings. His theory was that it didn't matter what the cow ate so long as she was fed. The questions of digestion and nourishment had not entered into his calculation.
It's only a "tenderfoot" farmer that would try such an experiment with a cow. But many a farmer feeds himself regardless of digestion and nutrition. He might almost as well eat shavings for all the good he gets out of his food. The result is that the stomach grows "weak" the action of the organs of digestion and nutrition are impaired and the man suffers the miseries of dyspepsia and the agonies of nervousness.

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