

# VARIOUS

INDIAN STORIES RETOLD  
FROM ST. NICHOLAS

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«Public Domain»

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# Various Indian Stories Retold From St. Nicholas

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This collection of Indian stories is the first in a series of volumes of historic tales retold from "St. Nicholas."

The books do not pretend to give anything like connected history, but by means of the story that thrills and interests they impart the real spirit of the times they depict in a way no youthful reader will be likely to forget.

Most of the stories in this book a boy of eight or nine can read for himself, and these are the years of his school life when he is being taught something of our colonial history and of the myths and legends of primitive man. Thus these stories, while delighting many children and tempting them to read "out of hours," will serve a very useful purpose.

## **INDIAN LULLABY**

Sleep, sleep, my boy; the Chippewas  
Are far away – are far away.  
Sleep, sleep, my boy; prepare to meet  
The foe by day – the foe by day!  
The cowards will not dare to fight  
Till morning break – till morning break.  
Sleep, sleep, my child, while still 'tis night;  
Then bravely wake – then bravely wake!

## INDIAN STORIES ONATOGA'S SACRIFICE

BY JOHN DIMITRY

ONCE, in the long ago, before the white man had heard of the continent on which we live, red men, who were brave and knew not what fear was in battle, trembled at the mention of a great man-eating bird that had lived before the time told of in the traditions known of their oldest chiefs.

This bird, which, according to the Indian legends, ate men, was known as the Piasau.

The favorite haunt of this terrible bird was a bluff on the Mississippi River, a short distance above the site of the present city of Alton, Illinois. There it was said to lie in wait, and to keep watch over the broad, open prairies. Whenever some rash Indian ventured out alone to hunt upon this fatal ground, he became the monster's prey. The legend says that the bird, swooping down with the fierce swiftness of a hawk, seized upon its victim and bore him to a gloomy cave wherein it made its horrid feasts. The monster must have had an insatiable appetite or a prolonged existence, for tradition declares that it depopulated whole villages. Then it was that the wise men began to see visions and to prophesy the speedy extinction of the tribe. Years of its ravages followed one upon another, until at length, according to the legend, was lost all reckoning of the time when first that strange, foul creature came to scourge their sunny plains. The aged men, whose youth was but a dim memory, could say only that the bird was as it had always been. None like it had ever been heard of save in vague traditions.

There was one, Onatoga, who began to ponder.

Now, Onatoga was the great leader of the Illini; one whose name was spoken with awe even in the distant wigwams north of the Great Lake. Long had he grieved and wondered over the will of the Great Spirit; that he should look upon the men of the Western prairies, not as warriors, but as deer or bison, only fit to fill the maw of so pestilent a thing as this monstrous bird! Before the new moon began to grow upon the face of the sky, Onatoga's resolve was taken. He would go to some spot deep in the forest where by fasting and prayer his spirit would become so pure that the Great Master of Life would hear him and once again be kind and turn His face back, in light, upon the Illini.

Stealing away from his tribe in the night, he plunged far into the trackless forest. Then, blackening his face, for a whole moon he fasted. The moon waxed full and then waned; but no vision came to assure him that the Great Spirit had heard his prayers. Only one more night remained. Wearied and sorrow-worn, he closed his eyes. But, through the deep sleep that fell upon him, came the voice of the Great Spirit. And this is the message that came to Onatoga, as he lay sleeping in body but, in his soul, awake:

"Arise, Chief of the Illini! Thou shalt save thy race. Choose thou twenty of thy warriors; noble-hearted, strong-armed, eagle-eyed. Put in each warrior's hand a bow. Give to each an arrow dipped in the venom of the snake. Seek then the man whose heart loveth the Great Spirit. Let him not fear to look the Piasau in the face; but see that the warriors, with ready bows, stand near in the shadow of the trees."

Onatoga awoke; strong, though he had fasted a month; happy, though he knew he was soon to die! Who, but he, the Great Chief of the Illini, should die for his people – for was it not death to look on the face of the Piasau?

Binding his moccasins firmly upon his feet, he washed the marks of grief from his face, and painted it with the brightest vermilion and blue. Thus, in the splendid colors of a triumphant warrior, he returned homeward. All was silent in the village when, in the gray light of early day, he entered

his lodge. Soon the joyful news was known. From lodge to lodge it spread until the last wigwam was reached. Onatoga's quest was successful!

Then the warriors began to gather. Furtively, even in their gladness, they sought his lodge, for the fear of the Piasau was over all. A solemn awe fell upon them as they gathered around the chief, who, it was whispered, had heard the voice of the Great Spirit. Without, on that high bluff, they knew that the fiend-bird crouched, waiting for the morning light to reveal its prey. Within, in sorrowing silence, they heard how the people could be saved; but the hearts of the warriors were heavy. All knew the sacrifice demanded – their bravest and their best!

Onatoga chose his twenty warriors and appointed them their place, where the rolling prairie was broken by the edge of the forest. Then, when the sun shot its first long shafts of light across the level grasses, the chief walked slowly forth and stood alone upon the prairie. The world in the morning light was beautiful to Onatoga's eyes. The flowers beneath his feet seemed to smile, and poured forth richest perfumes; the sun was glorious in its golden breast-plate, to do him honor; while the lark and the mock-bird sang his praise in joyous songs.

He had not long to wait. Soon, afar off, the dreaded Piasau was seen moving heavily through the clear morning air. Onatoga, drawing himself to the full measure of his lofty height, raised his death-song. The dull flutter of huge wings came nearer, and a great shadow came rushing over the sunlit fields. Onatoga, never ceasing his chant, faced the Piasau fearlessly. A sudden fierce swoop downward! In that very moment, twenty poisoned arrows, loosed by twenty faithful hands, sped true to their aim. With a scream that the bluffs sent rolling back in sharp and deafening echoes, the foul monster dropped dead! The Great Spirit loved the man who had been willing to sacrifice his life for his people. In the very instant when death seemed sure, he covered the heart of Onatoga with a shield; and he suffered not the wind to blow aside a single arrow from its mark, – the body of the fated Piasau.

Great were the rejoicings that followed and rich were the feasts that were held in honor of Onatoga. The Illini resolved that the story of the great deliverance and of the courageous love of Onatoga should not die, though they themselves should pass away. The cunning carvers of the tribe cut deep into the living rock of the bluff the terrible form of the Piasau. And, in later years, when young children asked the meaning of this great figure, so unlike any of the birds that they knew upon their rivers and their prairies, then the fathers would tell them the story of the Piasau, and how the Great Spirit had found, in Onatoga, a warrior who loved his fellow-men better than he loved his own life.

## WAUKEWA'S EAGLE

BY JAMES BUCKHAM

ONE day, when the Indian boy Waukewa was hunting along the mountain-side, he found a young eagle with a broken wing, lying at the base of a cliff. The bird had fallen from an aery on a ledge high above, and being too young to fly, had fluttered down the cliff and injured itself so severely that it was likely to die. When Waukewa saw it he was about to drive one of his sharp arrows through its body, for the passion of the hunter was strong in him, and the eagle plunders many a fine fish from the Indian's drying-frame. But a gentler impulse came to him as he saw the young bird quivering with pain and fright at his feet, and he slowly unbent his bow, put the arrow in his quiver, and stooped over the panting eaglet. For fully a minute the wild eyes of the wounded bird and the eyes of the Indian boy, growing gentler and softer as he gazed, looked into one another. Then the struggling and panting of the young eagle ceased; the wild, frightened look passed out of its eyes, and it suffered Waukewa to pass his hand gently over its ruffled and dragged feathers. The fierce instinct to fight, to defend its threatened life, yielded to the charm of the tenderness and pity expressed in the boy's eyes; and from that moment Waukewa and the eagle were friends.

Waukewa went slowly home to his father's lodge, bearing the wounded eaglet in his arms. He carried it so gently that the broken wing gave no twinge of pain, and the bird lay perfectly still, never offering to strike with its sharp beak the hands that clasped it.

Warming some water over the fire at the lodge, Waukewa bathed the broken wing of the eagle and bound it up with soft strips of skin. Then he made a nest of ferns and grass inside the lodge, and laid the bird in it. The boy's mother looked on with shining eyes. Her heart was very tender. From girlhood she had loved all the creatures of the woods, and it pleased her to see some of her own gentle spirit waking in the boy.

When Waukewa's father returned from hunting, he would have caught up the young eagle and wrung its neck. But the boy pleaded with him so eagerly, stooping over the captive and defending it with his small hands, that the stern warrior laughed and called him his "little squaw-heart." "Keep it, then," he said, "and nurse it until it is well. But then you must let it go, for we will not raise up a thief in the lodges." So Waukewa promised that when the eagle's wing was healed and grown so that it could fly, he would carry it forth and give it its freedom.

It was a month – or, as the Indians say, a moon – before the young eagle's wing had fully mended and the bird was old enough and strong enough to fly. And in the meantime Waukewa cared for it and fed it daily, and the friendship between the boy and the bird grew very strong.

But at last the time came when the willing captive must be freed. So Waukewa carried it far away from the Indian lodges, where none of the young braves might see it hovering over and be tempted to shoot their arrows at it, and there he let it go. The young eagle rose toward the sky in great circles, rejoicing in its freedom and its strange, new power of flight. But when Waukewa began to move away from the spot, it came swooping down again; and all day long it followed him through the woods as he hunted. At dusk, when Waukewa shaped his course for the Indian lodges, the eagle would have accompanied him. But the boy suddenly slipped into a hollow tree and hid, and after a long time the eagle stopped sweeping about in search of him and flew slowly and sadly away.

Summer passed, and then winter; and spring came again, with its flowers and birds and swarming fish in the lakes and streams. Then it was that all the Indians, old and young, braves and squaws, pushed their light canoes out from shore and with spear and hook waged pleasant war against

the salmon and the red-spotted trout. After winter's long imprisonment, it was such joy to toss in the sunshine and the warm wind and catch savory fish to take the place of dried meats and corn!

Above the great falls of the Apahoqui the salmon sported in the cool, swinging current, darting under the lee of the rocks and leaping full length in the clear spring air. Nowhere else were such salmon to be speared as those which lay among the riffles at the head of the Apahoqui rapids. But only the most daring braves ventured to seek them there, for the current was strong, and should a light canoe once pass the danger-point and get caught in the rush of the rapids, nothing could save it from going over the roaring falls.

Very early in the morning of a clear April day, just as the sun was rising splendidly over the mountains, Waukewa launched his canoe a half-mile above the rapids of the Apahoqui, and floated downward, spear in hand, among the salmon-riffles. He was the only one of the Indian lads who dared fish above the falls. But he had been there often, and never yet had his watchful eye and his strong paddle suffered the current to carry his canoe beyond the danger-point. This morning he was alone on the river, having risen long before daylight to be first at the sport.

The riffles were full of salmon, big, lusty fellows, who glided about the canoe on every side in an endless silver stream. Waukewa plunged his spear right and left, and tossed one glittering victim after another into the bark canoe. So absorbed in the sport was he that for once he did not notice when the head of the rapids was reached and the canoe began to glide more swiftly among the rocks. But suddenly he looked up, caught his paddle, and dipped it wildly in the swirling water. The canoe swung sidewise, shivered, held its own against the torrent, and then slowly, inch by inch, began to creep upstream toward the shore. But suddenly there was a loud, cruel snap, and the paddle parted in the boy's hands, broken just above the blade! Waukewa gave a cry of despairing agony. Then he bent to the gunwale of his canoe and with the shattered blade fought desperately against the current. But it was useless. The racing torrent swept him downward; the hungry falls roared tauntingly in his ears.

Then the Indian boy knelt calmly upright in the canoe, facing the mist of the falls, and folded his arms. His young face was stern and lofty. He had lived like a brave hitherto – now he would die like one.

Faster and faster sped the doomed canoe toward the great cataract. The black rocks glided away on either side like phantoms. The roar of the terrible waters became like thunder in the boy's ears. But still he gazed calmly and sternly ahead, facing his fate as a brave Indian should. At last he began to chant the death-song, which he had learned from the older braves. In a few moments all would be over. But he would come before the Great Spirit with a fearless hymn upon his lips.

Suddenly a shadow fell across the canoe. Waukewa lifted his eyes and saw a great eagle hovering over, with dangling legs, and a spread of wings that blotted out the sun. Once more the eyes of the Indian boy and the eagle met; and now it was the eagle who was master!

With a glad cry the Indian boy stood up in his canoe, and the eagle hovered lower. Now the canoe tossed up on that great swelling wave that climbs to the cataract's edge, and the boy lifted his hands and caught the legs of the eagle. The next moment he looked down into the awful gulf of waters from its very verge. The canoe was snatched from beneath him and plunged down the black wall of the cataract; but he and the struggling eagle were floating outward and downward through the cloud of mist. The cataract roared terribly, like a wild beast robbed of its prey. The spray beat and blinded, the air rushed upward as they fell. But the eagle struggled on with his burden. He fought his way out of the mist and the flying spray. His great wings threshed the air with a whistling sound. Down, down they sank, the boy and the eagle, but ever farther from the precipice of water and the boiling whirlpool below. At length, with a fluttering plunge, the eagle dropped on a sand-bar below the whirlpool, and he and the Indian boy lay there a minute, breathless and exhausted. Then the eagle slowly lifted himself, took the air under his free wings, and soared away, while the Indian boy knelt on the sand, with shining eyes following the great bird till he faded into the gray of the cliffs.

## A FOURTH OF JULY AMONG THE INDIANS

BY W. P. HOOPER

INDIANS – real Indians – real, live Indians – were what we, like all boys, wanted to see; and this was why, after leaving the railroad on which we had been traveling for several days and nights, we found ourselves at last in a big canvas-covered wagon lumbering across the monotonous prairie.

We were on our way to see a celebration of the Fourth of July at a Dakota Indian agency.

It was late in the afternoon of a hot summer's day. We had been riding since early morning, and had not met a living creature – not even a bird or a snake. Only those who have experienced it know how wearying to the eyes it is to gaze all day long, and see nothing but the sky and the grass.

However, an hour before sunset we *did* see something. At first, it looked like a mere speck against the sky; then it seemed like a bush or a shrub; but it rapidly increased in size as we approached. Then, with the aid of our field-glass, we saw it was a man on horseback. No, not exactly that, either; it was an Indian chief riding an Indian pony. Now, I have seen Indians in the East – "Dime Museum Indians." I have seen the Indians who travel with the circus – yes, and I have seen the untutored savages who sell bead-work at Niagara Falls; but this one was different – he was quite different. I felt sure that he was a genuine Indian. He was unlike the Indians I had seen in the East. The most striking difference was that this one presented a grand unwashed effect. It must have required years of patient industry in avoiding the wash-bowl, and great good luck in dodging the passing showers, for him to acquire the rich effect of color which he displayed. Though it was one of July's hottest days, he had on his head an arrangement made of fur, with head trimmings and four black-tipped feathers; a long braid of his hair, wound with strips of fur, hung down in front of each ear, and strings of beads ornamented his neck. He wore a calico shirt, with tin bands on his arms above the elbow; a blanket was wrapped around his waist; his leggings had strips of beautiful bright bead-work, and his moccasins were ornamented in the same style. But in his right hand he was holding a most murderous-looking instrument. It was a long wooden club, into one end of which three sharp, shining steel knife-blades were set. Though I had been complaining of the heat, still I now felt chilly as I looked at the weapon, and saw how well it matched the expression of his cruel mouth and piercing eyes.

He passed on while we were trying to make a sketch of him. However, the next day, an interpreter brought him around, and, for a small piece of tobacco, he was glad to pose while the sketch was being finished. We learned his name was "Can-h-des-ka-wan-ji-dan" (One Hoop).

A few moments later, we passed an iron post set firmly into the ground. It marked one of the boundaries of the Indian Reservation. We were now on a tract of land set aside by the United States Government as the living-ground of sixteen hundred "Santee" Sioux Indians. We soon saw more Indians, who, like us, seemed to be moving toward the little village at the Indian agency. Each group had put their belongings into a big bundle, and strapped it upon long poles, which were fastened at one end to the back of a pony. In this bundle the little papooses rode in great comfort, looking like blackbirds peering from a nest. In some cases, an older child would be riding in great glee on the pony's back among the poles. The family baggage seemed about equally distributed between the pony and the squaw who led him. She was preceded by her lord and master, the noble red Indian, who carried no load except his long pipe.

The next thing of interest was what is called a Red River wagon. It was simply a cart with two large wheels, the whole vehicle made of wood. As the axles are never oiled, the Red River carry-all keeps up a most terrible squeaking. This charming music-box was drawn by one ox, and contained

an Indian, who was driving with a whip. His wife and children were seated on the bottom of this jolting and shrieking cart.

As we neared the agency buildings, we passed many Indians who had settled for the night. They chose the wooded ravines, near streams, by which to put up their tents, or "tepees," which consisted of long poles covered with patched and smoke-stained canvas, with two openings, one at the top for a "smoke-hole" and the other for a door, through which any one must crawl in order to enter the domestic circle of the gentle savage. We entered several tepees, making ourselves welcome by gifts of tobacco to every member of the family. That night, after reaching the agency and retiring to our beds, we dreamed of smoking great big pipes, with stems a mile long, which were passed to us by horrible-looking black witches. But morning came at last, – and *such* a morning!

That Fourth of July morning I shall never forget. We were awakened by the most blood-curdling yells that ever pierced the ears of three white boys. It was the Indian war-whoop. I found myself instinctively feeling for my back hair, and regretting the distance to the railroad. We lingered indoors in a rather terrified condition, until we found out that this was simply the beginning of the day's celebration. It was the "sham-fight," but it looked real enough when the Indians came tearing by, their ponies seeming to enter into the excitement as thoroughly as their riders. There were some five hundred, in full frills and war-paint, and all giving those terrible yells.

Their costumes were simple, but gay in color – paint, feathers, and more paint, with an occasional shirt.

For weapons they carried guns, rifles, and long spears. Bows and arrows seemed to be out of style. A few had round shields on their left arms.

Most of the tepees had been collected together and pitched so as to form a large circle, and their wagons were placed outside this circle so as to make a sort of protection for the defending party. The attacking party, brandishing their weapons in the air with increased yells, rushed their excited and panting ponies up the slope toward the tepees, where they were met by a rapid discharge of blank cartridges and powder. Some of the ponies became frightened and unmanageable, several riders were unhorsed, and general confusion prevailed. The intrenched party, in the meantime, rushed out from behind their defenses, climbing on top of their wagons, yelling and dancing around like demons. Added to this, the sight of several riderless ponies flying wildly from the tumult made the sham-fight have a terribly realistic look.

After the excitement was over, the regular games which had been arranged for the day began.

In the foot-races, the costumes were so slight that there was nothing to describe – simply paint in fancy patterns, moccasins, and a girdle of red flannel. But how they could run! I did not suppose anything on two legs could go so fast. The lacrosse costumes were bright and attractive. The leader of one side wore a shirt of soft, tanned buck-skin, bead-work and embroidery on the front, long fringe on the shoulders, bands around the arms, and deep fringe on the bottom of the skirt. The legs were bare to the knee, and from there down to the toes was one mass of fine glittering bead-work. In the game, there were a hundred Indians engaged on each side. The game was long, but exciting, being skilfully played. The grounds extended about a mile in length. The ball was the size of a common baseball, and felt almost as solid as a rock, the center being of lead. The shape of the Indian lacrosse stick is shown in the sketch.

Then came games on horseback. But the most interesting performance of the whole day, and one in which they all manifested an absorbing interest, was the dinner.

At 3 a. m. several oxen had been butchered, and from that time till the dinner was served all the old squaws had their hands full. Fires were made in long lines, poles placed over them, and high black pots, kettles, and zinc pails filled with a combination of things, including beef and water, were suspended there and carefully tended by ancient Indian ladies in picturesque, witch-like costumes, who gently stirred the boiling bouillion with pieces of wood, while other seemingly more ancient and worn-out-looking squaws brought great bundles of wood from the ravines, tied up in blankets and

swung over their shoulders. Think of a dinner for sixteen hundred noble chiefs and braves, stalwart head-men, young bucks, old squaws, girls, and children! And such queer-looking children – some dressed in full war costume, some in the most approved dancing dresses.

One little boy, whose name was Sha-ke-to-pa (Four Nails), had five feathers – big ones, too – in his hair. His face was painted; he wore great round ear-rings, and rows of beads and claws around his neck; bands of beads on his little bare brown arms; embroidered leggings and beautiful moccasins, and a long piece of red cloth hanging from his waist. In fact, he was as gaily dressed as a grown-up Indian man, and he had a cunning little war-club, all ornamented and painted. When the dinner was nearly ready, the men began to seat themselves in a long curved line. Behind them, the women and children were gathered. When everything was ready, a chief wearing a long arrangement of feathers hanging from his back hair and several bead pouches across his shoulders, with a long staff in his left hand, walked into the center of the circle. Taking a spoonful of the soup, he held it high in the air, and then, turning slowly around, chanting a song, he poured the contents of the spoon upon the ground. This, an interpreter explained to us, was done to appease the spirits of the air. After this, the old squaws limped nimbly around with the pails of soup and other food, serving the men. After they were all bountifully and repeatedly helped, the women and children, who had been patiently waiting, were allowed to gather about the fragments and half-empty pots and finish the repast, which they did with neatness and despatch.

Then the warriors lay around and smoked their long-stem pipes, while the young men prepared for the pony races.

The first of the races was "open to all," and more than a hundred ponies and their riders were arranged in a row. Some of the ponies were very spirited, and seemed fully to realize what was going to take place, and they would persist in pushing ahead of the line. Then the other riders would start their ponies; then the whole line would have to be reformed. But finally they were all started, and such shouting, and such waving of whips in the air! – and how the little ponies did jump! When the race was over, how we all crowded around the winner, and how proud the pony as well as the rider seemed to feel! Now we had a better chance to examine the ponies than ever before, and some were very handsome. And such prices! Think of buying a beautiful three-year-old cream-colored pony for twenty dollars!

But as the hour of sunset approached, the interest in the races vanished, and so did most of the braves. They sought the seclusion of their bowers, to adorn themselves for the grand "grass dance," which was to begin at sunset.

What a contrast between their every-day dress and their dancing costumes! The former consists of a blanket more or less tattered and torn, while the gorgeousness of the latter discourages a description in words; so I refer you to the pictures. Of course, we were eager to purchase some of the Indian finery, but it was a bad time to trade successfully with the Indians. They were too much taken up with the pleasures of the day to care to turn an honest penny by parting with any of their ornaments. However, we succeeded in buying a big war-club set with knives, some pipes with carved stems a yard long, a few knife-sheaths and pouches, glittering with beads, and several pairs of beautiful moccasins, – most of which now adorn a New York studio.

Soon the highly decorated red men silently assembled inside a large space inclosed by bushes stuck into the ground. This was their dance-hall. The squaws were again shut out, as, according to Santee Sioux custom, they are not allowed to join in the dances with the men. The Indians, as they came in, sat quietly down around the sides of the inclosure. The musicians were gathered around a big drum, on which they pounded with short sticks, while they sang a sort of wild, weird chant. The effect, to an uneducated white man's ear, was rather depressing, but it seemed very pleasing to the Indians.

The ball was opened by an old chief, who, rising slowly, beckoned the others to follow him. In his right hand the leader carried a wooden gun, ornamented with eagles' feathers; in the left he held

a short stick, with bells attached to it. He wore a cap of otter skin, from which hung a long train. His face was carefully painted in stripes of blue and yellow.

At first, they all moved slowly, jumping twice on each foot; then, as the musicians struck up a more lively pounding and a more inspiring song, the dancers moved with more rapidity, giving an occasional shout and waving their arms in the air. As they grew warmer and more excited, the musicians redoubled their exertions on the drum and changed their singing into prolonged howls; then one of them, dropping his drumsticks, sprang to his feet, and, waving his hands over his head, he yelled till he was breathless, urging on the dancers. This seemed to be the finishing touch. The orchestra and dancers seemed to vie with each other as to who should make the greater noise. Their yells were deafening, and, brandishing their knives and tomahawks, they sprang around with wonderful agility. Of course, this intense excitement could last but a short time; the voices of the musicians began to fail, and, finally, with one last grand effort, they all gave a terrible shout, and then all was silence. The dancers crawled back to their places around the inclosure, and sank exhausted on the grass. But soon some supple brave regained enough strength to rise. The musicians slowly recommenced, other dancers came forward, and the "mad dance" was again in full blast. And thus the revels went on, hour after hour, all night, and continued even through the following day. But there was a curious fascination about it, and, tired as we were after the long day, we stood there looking on hour after hour. Finally, after midnight had passed, we gathered our Indian purchases about us, including two beautiful ponies, and began our return trip toward the railroad and civilization. But the monotonous sound of the Indian drum followed us mile after mile over the prairie; in fact, it followed us much better than my new spotted pony.

My arm aches now, as I remember how that pony hung back.

## A BOY'S VISIT TO CHIEF JOSEPH

BY ERSKINE WOOD

[Note: The author of the sketch "A Boy's Visit to Chief Joseph" was Erskine Wood, a boy thirteen years old. He was then an expert shot with the rifle, and had brought down not only small game, but bear, wolves, and deer. A true woodsman, he was also a skilled archer and angler, having camped alone in the woods, and lived upon the game secured by shooting and fishing.

When Chief Joseph, of the Nez Percé Indians, went to the national capital, he met Erskine, and invited the young hunter to visit his camp some summer. So in July, 1892, the boy started alone from Portland, Oregon, carrying his guns, bows, rods, and blanket, and made his own way to Chief Joseph's camp on the Nespilem River.

The Indians received him hospitably, and he took part in their annual fall hunt. He was even adopted into the tribe by the chief, and, according to their custom, received an Indian name, *Ishem-tux-il-pilp*, – "Red Moon."

Chief Joseph's band was the remnant of the tribe which, under his leadership, fought the United States army so gallantly in 1877; they carried on a running fight of about eleven hundred miles in one summer.

When Erskine visited him, the chief was in every way most kind and hospitable to his young guest.

*C. E. S. Wood.]*

I LEFT Portland on the third of July, 1892, to visit Chief Joseph, who was chief of the Nez Percé Indians. They lived on the Colville Agency, two or three hundred miles north of the city of Spokane, in the State of Washington.

I arrived at Davenport, Washington, on the fourth of July. There was no stage, so I had to stay all night. I left for Fort Spokane next day, arriving at about seven in the evening. As we did not start for Nespilem until the seventh, I went and visited Colonel Cook, commanding officer at the fort. I stayed all night, and next morning I helped the soldiers load cartridges at the magazine. That afternoon I watched the soldiers shooting volleys at the target range. We started for Nespilem in a wagon at three o'clock in the morning.

The next day I went fishing in the morning, and in the afternoon I went up the creek again, fishing with Doctor Latham. He was doctor at the Indian agency. The next day I went down to Joseph's camp, where I stayed the rest of the time – about five months – alone with the Indians. The doctor and the teamster returned to the agency. During my first day in the camp, I wrote a letter to my mother, and bought a beaded leather belt from one of the squaws. I stayed about camp most of the first day; but in the afternoon I went fishing, and caught a nice string of trout.

The Indian camp is usually in two or more long rows of tepees. Sometimes two or three families occupy one lodge. When they are hunting and drying meat for their winter supply, several lodges are put together, making one big lodge about thirty feet long, in which are two or three fires instead of one. They say that it dries the meat better.

When game gets scarce, camp is broken and moved to a different place. The men and boys catch the horses, and then the squaws have to put on the pack-saddles (made of bone and covered with untanned deer-hide) and pack them. The men sit around smoking and talking. When all is ready, the different families set out, driving their spare horses and pack-horses in front of them. The men generally hunt in the early morning; they get up at about two o'clock, take a vapor bath, get breakfast,

and start to hunt at about three. Sometimes they hunt on horseback, and sometimes on foot. They come back at about ten or eleven o'clock, and if they have been on foot and have been successful they take a horse and go and bring in the game. The meat is always divided. If Chief Joseph is there, he divides it; and if he is not there, somebody is chosen to fill his place. They believe that if the heads or horns of the slain deer are left on the ground, the other deer feel insulted and will go away, and that would spoil the hunting in that neighborhood. So the heads and horns are hung up in trees. They think, too, that when anybody dies, his spirit hovers around the spot for several days afterward, and so they always move the lodge. I was sitting with Joseph in the tepee once, when a lizard crawled in. I discovered it, and showed it to Joseph. He was very solemn, and I asked him what was the matter. "A medicine-man sent it here to do me harm. You have very good eyes to discover the tricks of the medicine-men." I was going to throw it into the fire, but he stopped me, saying: "If you burn it, it will make the medicine-men angry. You must kill it some other way."

The Indians' calendars are little square sticks of wood about eight inches long. Every day they file a little notch, and on Sunday a little hole is made. When any one dies, the notch is painted red or black. When they are home at Nespilem, they all meet out on the prairie on certain days, and have horse-racing. They run for about two miles. When they are on the home-stretch, about half a mile from the goal, a lot of men get behind them and fire pistols and whip the horses.

I was out grouse-hunting with Niky Mowitz, my Indian companion, and we started a deer. We were near the camp, and he proposed to run around in front of the deer and head it for camp. So we started, and the way he got over those rocks was a wonder! If we had not had the dogs, we might have succeeded; but as soon as they caught sight of the deer, they went after it like mad, and we did not see it again. Niky Mowitz is a nephew and adopted son of Chief Joseph; his father was killed in the Nez Percé war of 1877. In the fall hunt the boys are not allowed to go grouse- or pheasant-hunting without first getting permission of the chief in command. And it is never granted to them until the boys have driven the horses to water and counted them to see if any are missing.

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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