

IV.

GLOOSCAP AND THE MEGŪMOOWĚŠOO.

A MARRIAGE ADVENTURE.

[NOTE.—The Micmacs believe in the existence of a superhuman being in the form of an Indian, named Glooscap. He is benevolent, exercises a care over the Indians, lives in a wigwam, an old woman keeps house for him, and a small “boy fairy” is his servant. The servant’s name is Abĭstānāooch (Marten).

They believe in other supernatural beings, living in the woods, formed like men and women, and possessing vast powers, who can sing most charmingly, and play on the flute exquisitely. They sometimes are very friendly to mortals, and are able to convert them into MegŭmoowĚšoo. Glooscap has the power to make the same transformations.

One more remark may help to add interest to the following tale. The custom of giving a price for a wife is an ancient Eastern custom, as may be seen in the case of Jacob. To set the intended son-in-law to do some dangerous exploit in order if possible to destroy him, has an historical verification in the case of Saul, who demanded of David an hundred foreskins of the Philistines (1 Sam. xviii. 25). Saul thought to make David fall by the hands of the Philistines. But to the tale.]

THERE was once a large Indian village, from which, on a certain occasion, two young men started on an expedition, one to obtain a wife, and the other to be his companion and friend. After journeying a long distance, they reached an island where Glooscap was residing. He lived in a very large wigwam. Glooscap himself, the old woman, his house-keeper, and his waiting-man, Marten, were at home. The young men enter the wigwam and take their seats. A meal is immediately prepared for them and placed in a very tiny

dish. This dish is so small and there is so little food, that they conclude that it will make but a sorry dinner. They find out, however, that they are mistaken. Small as is the portion of food assigned to them, they may eat as much as they like, but they cannot reduce the amount; there is just as much in the dish as ever. They finish their meal, and are well satisfied and refreshed.

When night comes on, they lie down to sleep; one of them lies next to Glooscap, his head at Glooscap's feet.¹ Now it happens that as this poor fellow is very hungry, he eats enormously, deceived by the fact that the food remains undiminished; consequently he is ill of colic in the night, and during his sleep meets with an unlucky accident. Thereupon Glooscap arouses him, goes with him down to the river, causes him to strip off and take a thorough ablution. He then furnishes him with a change of raiment, combs his hair, and gives him a magic hair-string, which imparts to him supernatural power, and turns him into a "Megūmoowěsoo." He gives him a tiny flute, and teaches him to discourse sweet music therefrom. He also teaches him how to sing. He had not been at all skilled in the art of song before; but when Glooscap leads off and bids him follow, he has a fine voice, and can sing with all ease.

The next day this young man solicits the loan of Glooscap's canoe. Glooscap says, "I will lend it to you willingly, if you will only bring it home again; the fact is, I never lent it in my life, but that I had to go after it before I got it home again." (The business of lending and borrowing is, as it would seem, about the same in all places and in all ages.) The young adventurer promises faithfully that he will bring the canoe back in due time, and the two young men go down to the shore to make ready for their journey. They look round in vain for the *kweedūn* ("canoe"); there is no such thing to be seen. There is a small rocky island near the shore with

¹ This is the way in which, among the Indians, a man and his wife usually sleep. *Witkusoodjick*, — they lie heads and points.

trees growing on it, but there is no canoe. Glooscap tells them this island is his *kweedŭn*. They go on board, set sail, and find the floating island very manageable as a canoe. It goes like magic.

Straight out to the sea they steer, and after a while reach a large island, where they land, haul up the canoe, hide it in the woods, and go forth in search of the inhabitants. They soon come upon a large village. There a chief resides who has a beautiful daughter; he has managed to destroy a great many suitors by imposing upon them difficult tasks, as the condition of marrying the girl. They have accepted the terms, and have either died in the attempt to perform the tasks, or have been put to death for failure. The two young men enter the chief's wigwam: they are politely invited up to an honorable seat; they sit down, and the MegŭmoowĚsoo introduces the subject of his visit in behalf of his friend. There is no long preamble. A short but significant sentence explains all: "My friend is tired of living alone." This tells the whole story, and it takes but two words in Micmac to tell it: *Sewincoodoo-gwahloogwĚt' nĭgŭmachŭ* (they are words of somewhat formidable length). The chief gives his consent, but he imposes a somewhat dangerous condition. His intended son-in-law must first bring in the head of a *chepĕchcalm* ("horned dragon").¹ The terms are accepted; the two young men go out and retire to another wigwam, where they pass the night.

Some time in the night the MegŭmoowĚsoo leaves the lodge and goes dragon-hunting. He finds a hole in the ground where the serpent hides, and lays a stick of wood across it. Then he dances round and round the hole to induce the enemy to come forth. Presently his "dragonship" pokes up his head to reconnoitre, and then begins to come out. In doing this he drops his neck upon the log that has been purposely placed there for his accommodation, and one blow from the hatchet severs his head from the trunk. The

¹ See pages 12, 53, and 116.

Indian seizes it by the shining yellow horns, and bears it off in triumph. He lays it down by the side of his sleeping friend, rouses him, and directs him to carry it over to his father-in-law. He does so; and the old man, astonished, says to himself, "This time I shall lose my child."

But the young man has further trials of skill to undergo. The old chief coolly says, "I should like to see my new son-in-law coast down hill on a hand-sled." There happens to be a high mountain in the neighborhood, the sides of which are rugged and steep; and this is the place selected for the coasting expedition. Two sleds are brought out. The intended son-in-law and his friend are to occupy one of them, and two stalwart fellows, who are *boöřnák* ("wizards") withal, are to occupy the other. They ascend the mountain in company; when all is ready, Megūmoowěsoo and his friend take the lead, the former undertaking to steer the sled; the two wizards follow, expecting that their friends will be tumbled off their sleds before they go far, and that they will be run over and crushed to death. The word being given, away they speed at a fearful rate, down, down, down the rough path, and the young man soon loses his balance, and away he goes. His companion, however, seizes him with all ease, and replaces him upon the sled, but makes this a pretext for turning a little aside to adjust matters, and the other sled passes them. In an instant they are again under way, and, coming to some of the rugged steps, their sled makes a bound and leaps quite over the other, which it now leaves behind; the Megūmoowěsoo shouting and singing as they fly, the sled thunders on to the bottom of the mountain. Nor does its speed slacken there; on and on it darts towards the village, with the same velocity, until it strikes the side of the old chief's wigwam, which it rips out from end to end. The poor old chief springs up in terror, and exclaims aloud, "I have lost my daughter this time!" He finds that he has his match.

But there are other trials of magical prowess to be made. He must run a race with one of the magicians. They get

ready, and MegŭmoowĚsoo slips his magical pipe into his friend's hand, thus arming him with magical power; and off they start, quietly side by side at first, so that they can converse together. "Who and what are you?" the bridegroom asks his friend. "I am Wĕgâdĕšk' (Northern Lights)," he answers. "Who and what are you?" "I am Wōsogwōdĕšk (Chain-lightning)," is the answer; each of course intending these high-sounding epithets as a boastful declaration of his speed in running. Chain-lightning wins. He arrives about noon, having made the whole course round the world, but not till towards evening does Northern Lights come in, panting. Once more the chief exclaims, "I must lose my daughter this time!"

One more game finishes the dangerous sports of the occasion. They must swim and dive, and see which can remain the longer under water. So they plunge in, and again inquire each other's names. "What is your name?" the bridegroom asks the *boōŭn*. "I am Ukchigŭmooĕch (Sea-duck)," he answers. "And who are you?" "I am Kweemoo (Loon)," he answers. So down they plunge. After a long time Sea-duck bobs up, but they wait and wait for the appearance of Loon. Then the old chief declares that he is satisfied. The young man may take the girl and go; but the wedding must be celebrated by a regular dance in which all may participate. A cleared, well-beaten spot near the chief's wigwam is the dancing-ground. When all is ready, the MegŭmoowĚsoo springs up and begins the dance. If there is any concealed plot connected with the dance, he determines to disconcert it; at all events he will show them what he can do. Round and round the circle he steps in measured tread. His feet sink deep into the smooth compact earth at every step, and plough it up into high uneven ridges at every turn. He sinks deeper and deeper into the earth, until at last naught save his head is seen above the ground as he spins round the circle. He then stops; but he has put an end to the dancing for that day, as the ground has been rendered totally unfit for the exercise.

The games are now all over, and the young man and his friend have come off victorious in every trial. The "lady fair" is given him for his bride, and the happy bridegroom and his friend, taking her with them, launch the magical canoe and start for *boosjik* ("home"). Their troubles and dangers are not over. The wily old chief sends some of his magical band to thwart them on their way. As they paddle quietly along over the glassy surface of the sea, they perceive that a storm has been conjured up ahead, and it is bearing down apace upon them; but if one conjurer can raise the wind, so can another; and when "Greek meets Greek," then comes the tug-of-war. The only question is which is the more expert warrior of the two. In a trial of enchantment it is the same. If one can blow, so can the other; and the one that can blow the harder beats. The Megūmoowěsoo stands up in the canoe, inflates his lungs, swells out his cheeks, and blows for dear life; he puffs the stronger gale. Wind meets wind; the approaching storm is driven back, and leaves the sea all (*āwibāncāk*) calm and smooth as before.

They now proceed on their way, but keep a good lookout for "breakers." Presently they perceive something sticking up in the water, which on closer examination proves to be a beaver's tail. They understand it in an instant. A *booōin* has assumed this form to lull suspicion; and intends, by a blow of his tail as they pass, to capsize the canoe. Megūmoowěsoo steers directly towards the tail, and just as they come up to it he exclaims, "I am a capital hand to hunt beavers; many is the one I have killed;" and he deals a blow with his hatchet, which severs the tail from the body and kills the wizard.

They then proceed, but haul close in shore in order to round the point. They see an animal about the size of a small dog, which bears a somewhat unsavory name, and which sometimes deluges his pursuers with a still more unsavory perfumery. This animal is termed in Micmac *abookcheeloo*; in English he is commonly known as the skunk, but by way of euphony he is called Sir John Mephitis. Sir John on this

occasion happens to be a necromancer, sent out by the disconcerted old chief to oppose the progress of the wedding-party. He has arranged his battery, and stands ready to discharge his artillery as they approach. But the MegŭmoowĚsoo is too much for him. He has a spear all ready; he has whittled out a small stick, which he sends whirling through the air with unerring aim, and the poor skunk gives two or three kicks and dies. His destroyer steps ashore and takes a pole, sharpens the end, transfixes the animal upon it, sticks the pole up in the ground, and leaves poor Sir John dangling in the air. *Lik-cho-je-nain'*¹ he exclaims. "There, sir, you can exhibit yourself there as long as you please."

Their dangers are now all over. They soon arrive at Glooscap's habitation. They find him waiting for them at the shore. He says, "Well, my friends, I see you have returned my canoe." "We have, indeed," they reply. "And what kind of a time have you had?" he inquires. They assure him that they have had a splendid time, and have had uninterrupted success. At this he manifests his great satisfaction; he has been cognizant of everything as it went along, and has had no small share in their triumphs. After entertaining them he dismisses them, telling the MegŭmoowĚsoo that should he get into trouble, he is but to think of him, and assistance will be sent forthwith. The two friends with the bride go home, and then they separate, — one to pursue the course of ordinary mortals, the other to move in that higher sphere to which he has been raised.

¹ *Lik-cho-je-nain'* will not bear literal translating.