

Waheenee

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FOURTH CHAPTER

STORY TELLING

My good old grandmother could be stern when I was naughty; nevertheless, I loved her dearly, and I know she was fond of me. After the death of my mother, it fell to Turtle to care for me much of the time. There were other children in the household, and, with so many mouths to feed, my two other mothers, as I called them, had plenty of work to do.

Indians are great story tellers; especially are they fond of telling tales around the lodge fire in the long evenings of autumn and winter. My father and his cronies used sometimes to sit up all night, drumming and singing and telling stories. Young men often came with gift of robe or knife, to ask him to tell them tales of our tribe.

I was too young yet to understand many of these tales. My father was hours telling some

of them, and they had many strange words. But my grandmother used to tell me stories as she sat or worked by the lodge fire.

One evening in the corn planting moon, she was making ready her seed for the morrow's planting. She had a string of braided ears lying beside her. Of these ears she chose the best, broke off the tip and butt of each, and shelled the perfect grain of the mid-cob into a wooden bowl. Baby-like, I ran my fingers through the shiny grain, spilling a few kernels on the floor.



"Do not do that," cried my grandmother. "Corn is sacred; if you waste it, the gods will be angry."

I still drew my fingers through the smooth grain, and my grandmother continued: "Once a Ree woman went out to gather her corn. She tied her robe about her with a big fold in the front, like a pocket. Into this she dropped the ears that she plucked, and bore them off to the husking pile. All over the field she went, row by row, leaving not an ear.

"She was starting off with her last load when she heard a weak voice, like a babe's, calling, 'Please, please do not go. Do not leave me.'

"The woman stopped, astonished. She put down her load. 'Can there be a babe hidden

in the corn?" she thought. She then carefully searched the field, hill by hill, but found nothing.

"She was taking up her load, when again she heard the voice: 'Oh, please do not go. Do not leave me!' Again she searched, but found nothing.

"She was lifting her load when the voice came the third time: 'Please, please, do not go! Please, do not leave me!'

"This time the woman searched every corn hill, lifting every leaf. And lo, in one corner of the field, hidden under a leaf, she found a tiny nubbin of yellow corn. It was the nubbin that had been calling to her. For so the gods would teach us not to be wasteful of their gifts."

Another evening I was trying to parch an ear of corn over the coals of our lodge fire. I had stuck the ear on the end of a squash spit, as I had seen my mothers do; but my baby fingers were not strong enough to fix the ear firmly, and it fell off into the coals and began to burn. My mouth puckered, and I was ready to cry.

My grandmother laughed. "You should put only half the ear on the spit," she said. "That is the way the Mandans did when they first gave us corn."

I dropped the spit and, forgetting the burning ear, asked eagerly, "How did the Mandans give us corn, grandmother. Tell me the story."

Turtle picked up the spit and raked the burning ear from the ashes. "I have told you

that the gods gave us corn to eat, not to waste," she said. "Some of the kernels on this cob are well parched." And she shelled off a handful and put one of the hot kernels in her mouth.

"I will tell you the story," she continued. "I had it from my mother when I was a little girl like you.

"In the beginning, our Hidatsa people lived under the waters of Devils Lake. They had earth lodges and lived much as we live now. One day some hunters found the root of a grapevine growing down from the lake overhead. They climbed the vine and found themselves on this earth. Others climbed the vine until half the tribe had escaped; but, when a fat woman tried to climb it, the vine broke, leaving the rest of the tribe under the lake.

"Those who had safely climbed the vine, built villages of earth lodges. They lived by hunting; and some very old men say that they also planted small fields in ground beans and wild potatoes. As yet the Hidatsas knew nothing of corn or squashes.

"One day, a war party that had wandered west to the Missouri river saw on the other side a village of earth lodges like their own. It was a village of the Mandans. Neither they nor the Hidatsas would cross over, each party fearing the other might be enemies.

"It was in the fall of the year, and the Missouri was running low, so that an arrow could be shot from shore to shore. The Mandans parched some ears of ripe corn with the grain

on the cob. These ears they broke in pieces, stuck the pieces on the points of arrows and shot them across the river. 'Eat!' they called. The word for 'eat' is the same in both the Hidatsa and the Mandan languages.

"The Hidatsas ate of the parched corn. They returned to their village and said, 'We have found a people on a great river, to the west. They have a strange kind of grain. We ate of it and found it good.'

"After this, a party of Hidatsas went to visit the Mandans. The Mandan chief took an ear of corn, broke it in two, and gave half to the Hidatsas for seed. This half ear the Hidatsas took home, and soon every family in the village was planting corn."

My father had been listening, as he sat smoking on the other side of the fire. "I know that story," he said. "The name of the Mandan chief was Good-Fur Robe."

My grandmother then put me to bed. I was so sleepy that I did not notice she had eaten up all the corn I had parched.

Winter came again, and spring. As soon as the soil could be worked, my mothers and old



Turtle began cleaning up our field, and breaking new ground to add to it. Our first year's field had been small; but my mothers added to it each season, until the field was as large as our family needed.

I was too little to note very much of what was done. I remember that my father set up boundary marks—little piles of earth or stones, I think they were—to mark the corners of the field we claimed. My mothers and Turtle began at one end of the field and worked forward. My mothers had their heavy iron hoes; and Turtle, her old-fashioned digging stick.

On the new ground, my mothers first cut the long grass with their hoes, bearing it off the field to be burned. They next dug and loosened the soil in places for the corn hills, which they laid off in rows. These hills they planted. Then all summer in this and other parts of the field they worked with their hoes, breaking and loosening the soil between the corn hills and cutting weeds.

Small trees and bushes, I know, were cut off with axes; but I remember little of this labor, most of it having been done the year before, when I was yet quite small. My father once told me that in very old times, when the women cleared a field, they first dug the corn hills with digging sticks, and afterwards worked between them with their bone hoes.

I remember this season's work the better for a dispute that my mothers had with two neighbors, Lone Woman and Goes-Back-to-Next-

Timber. These two women were clearing lands that bordered our own. My father, I have said, to set up claim to our land, had placed boundary marks, one of them in the corner that touched the fields of Lone Woman and Goes-Back-to-Next-Timber. While my mothers were busy clearing and digging up the other end of their field, their two neighbors invaded this marked-off corner. Lone Woman had even dug up a small part before she was discovered.

My mothers showed Lone Woman the mark my father had placed. "This land belongs to us," they said; "but we will pay you and Goes-Back-to-Next-Timber for any rights you may think are yours. We do not want our neighbors to bear us any hard feelings."

We Indians thought our fields sacred, and we did not like to quarrel about them. A family's right to a field once having been set up, no one thought of disputing it. If any one tried to seize land belonging to another, we thought some evil would come upon him; as that one of his family would die or have some bad sickness.

There is a story of a hunter who had before been a black bear, and had been given great magic power. He dared try to catch eagles from another man's pit, and had his mind taken from him for doing so. Thus the gods punished him for entering ground that was not his own.

Lone Woman and Goes-Back-to-Next-Timber having withdrawn, my grandmother Turtle undertook to clear and break the ground that had been in dispute. She was a little woman but active,

and she loved to work out-of-doors. Often, when my mothers were busy in the earth lodge, Turtle would go out to work in the field, and she would take me along for company. I was too little to help her any, but I liked to watch her work.

With her digging stick Turtle dug up a little round place in the center of the corner, and



around this she circled from day to day, enlarging the dug-up space. She had folded her robe over her middle, like a pad. Resting the handle of her digging stick against her folded robe, she would drive the point into the soft earth to a depth equal to the length of my hand and pry up the soil.

She broke clods by striking them smartly with her digging stick. Roots of coarse grass, weeds, small brush and the like, she took in her hand and shook or struck them against the ground, to knock off the loose earth clinging to them. She then cast them into little piles to dry. In a few days she gathered these piles into a heap about four feet high and burned them.

My grandmother worked in this way all summer, but not always in the corner that had been in dispute. Some days, I remember, she dug along the edges of the field, to add to it and make the edges even. Of course, not all the labor of

enlarging the field was done by Turtle; but she liked to have me with her when she worked, and I remember best what I saw her do.

It was my grandmother's habit to rise early in the summer months. She often arrived at the field before sunrise; about ten o'clock she returned to the lodge to eat and rest.

One morning, having come to the field quite early, I grew tired of my play before my grandmother had ended her work. "I want to go home," I begged, and I began to cry. Just then a strange bird flew into the field. It had a long curved beak, and made a queer cry, *cur-lew, cur-lew*.

I stopped weeping. My grandmother laughed.

"That is a curlew," she said. "Once at the mouth of the Knife river, a woman went out with her digging stick to dig wild turnips. The woman had a babe. Growing tired of carrying her babe on her back, she laid it on the ground.

"The babe began to cry. The mother was busy digging turnips, and did not go to her babe as she should have done. By and by she looked up. Her babe was flying away as a bird!

"The bird was a curlew, that cries like a babe. Now, if you cry, perhaps you, too, will turn into a curlew."



INDIAN LEGENDS FROM THE NORTHERN ROCKIES

✱

by Ella E. Clark



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BY ELLA E. CLARK

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Origin of the Beaver Medicine Bundle

THE ELABORATE Beaver Medicine Ceremonial of the Blackfeet is described fully by Walter McClintock in *The Old North Trail*. Owner of the Beaver Medicine Bundle, and also high priest of the Sun Dance, was Chief Mad Wolf; he ceremonially adopted McClintock as his son and gave him a name which means "White Weasel Moccasin."

After the white man observed the Beaver Medicine Ceremonial the first time, Chief Mad Wolf said to him, "When I was a young man, I, too, became interested in the mysteries of the medicine, which have been taught me by old Indians, and what they told me I know to be true. I have never before explained those mysteries to white men, because I have been afraid to trust them. I am now willing to have you repeat these to the white race, because I know you will speak the truth and because I feel toward you as a father to his son. . . ."

"What I tell you happened long ago, when our people made all of their tools and weapons from stone, and when they used dogs instead of horses for beasts of burden."

McClintock wrote that it is difficult for a white person to realize "the deep solemnity with which the Indians opened the sacred Bundle. To them it was a moment of deepest reverence and religious feeling."

IN THOSE DAYS, long ago, there were two orphan brothers, Akaiyan and Nopastis. Akaiyan, the younger, lived with Nopastis, who was married to a woman with an evil heart. She disliked Akaiyan, and every day she urged her husband to cast his brother off. One day when Nopastis came home, he found his wife with her clothes torn and her body mangled.

"While you were away," the woman said, "your brother treated me brutally."

Saying nothing to his brother, Nopastis planned how he could get rid of Akaiyan forever. In the middle of the summer, when the ducks and geese were dropping their feathers, he suggested to his younger brother that they go together to an island in a large lake.

"At this time," said Nopastis, "many ducks and geese will be there. We can gather the feathers they have dropped and use them for our arrows."

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When they came to the lake, they built a raft by binding logs together with buffalo rawhide. Then they floated on it to an island far out from shore. There Akaiyan wandered off alone. As he was returning to the beach with his arms full of feathers, he was surprised to see his brother out on the lake, going toward the mainland.

"Do not leave me here!" Akaiyan called to his brother. "Do not leave me to perish on this island."

"You deserve no pity," Nopastis called back. "You have treated my wife brutally."

"I have not. I solemnly swear before the Sun that I have never harmed her."

Heartlessly Nopastis replied, "You can live alone on the island all winter. When spring comes, I will return to pick up your bones."

Akaiyan sat down and cried in despair. Then he called upon the animals and the spirits of the water to help him. He also prayed to the Sun, Moon, and Stars:

*Behold, O Sun! I cast away whatever of bad I have done.
O Moon! O Stars! Pity me! Give me strength!*

After this prayer, Akaiyan felt calmer and stronger. Walking around the island, he found a few branches and built a shelter. He also gathered many feathers, piled them up, and made a bed that fitted his body so well that he slept warm on the coldest nights. Before the ducks and geese started south, he killed many. Some of them he kept for his winter food; others he skinned and made a warm robe for himself by binding the skins together with alder bark.

One day he found a beaver lodge in a spot on the island where he had never been before. For a long time he lay watching it and weeping to himself. At last a little beaver came out of the lodge and said to him, "My father wants you to come into our lodge."

Akaiyan followed the little beaver into the lodge and there saw a big beaver with his wife and family seated around him. The father beaver was white from the snows of many winters, and so large that the man knew he must be the chief of the whole Beaver tribe.

"Be seated," said the Beaver Chief. "Why are you alone on this island?"

"I have been treated unjustly and have been left alone here to die."

The Beaver Chief tried to comfort him. "My son, the time will soon come when we will close up our lodge for the winter. The lake will freeze over, and we will not go out again until the warm winds of spring have broken up the ice. Stay with us here in our lodge. We will teach you many wonderful things. When you return home, you can take with you knowledge that will be of great value to your people."

The beavers were so kind that Akaiyan decided to stay with them. He took into the lodge with him many ducks and geese for food and his bird skin robe to keep him warm. Before the weather turned cold, the beavers closed their lodge, leaving at the top a hole for air. During the coldest days and nights the beavers lay close to Akaiyan and placed their tails across his body to keep him warm. He made friends with the whole family, but he liked best the smallest and youngest beaver. Little Beaver was the favorite also of Beaver Chief.

The family taught Akaiyan the names of herbs and roots which the Blackfeet still use to cure our people when they are sick. They showed him, also, different paints and explained their use, saying, "If you should use these, they will bring your people good luck and will keep sickness and death away." They gave him the seeds of tobacco and taught him how to plant them with songs and prayers. He saw many dances belonging to their medicines, and he listened carefully to their songs and prayers. Beaver Chief and his wife taught Akaiyan the prayers and songs and dances of their own medicine, saying to him, "If you will give this Beaver Medicine Ceremonial when any of your people are sick or dying, they will be restored to health."

Akaiyan noticed that the beavers never ate during their ceremonial, that they beat time with their tails, and that they always stopped when they heard any suspicious noise, just as they do when they are working. They made scratches on the wall of the lodge to mark the days and then marked the moons with a stick. "We count seven moons,"

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they said, "between the time when the leaves fall and the time when we open the lodge in the spring. When we hear the ice breaking in the lake, we know it will soon be time for us to leave our winter home."

One day Little Beaver said to Akaiyan, "Before you leave us, my father will offer you a gift and allow you to choose anything within the lodge. When he asks you for your choice, you say that you will take your little brother. He will ask you four times to choose something else, but you must take me with you because I have more power to help you than any of the others have."

When the ducks and geese were flying north, the beavers opened their lodge for the summer. Then Beaver Chief said to Akaiyan, "You will soon be leaving us, because it is time for your older brother to return to the island. Before you start, I want you to choose something, anything, from my lodge to take with you."

Remembering the advice of Little Beaver, Akaiyan replied, "I would like to have your youngest child."

Four times the Beaver Chief tried to persuade him to take something else, and four times Akaiyan asked only for Little Beaver. After the fourth reply, Beaver Chief said, "My son, you show great wisdom in your choice. I am sorry to see him go, for he is my best worker and the wisest of my children. But because of my promise, I will let you take him."

"When you return to your people," Beaver Chief continued, "make a sacred Bundle like the one you saw us using in our ceremonial. We will teach you the songs and prayers and dances that belong to that Bundle. When any of your people are sick or dying, if a relative will make a vow to the Beaver Medicine, the sick person will be restored to health."

One evening, when Beaver Chief returned from his cutting, he said to Akaiyan, "My son, stay in the lodge tomorrow and do not show yourself. Today when I was among the trees on the shore of the mainland, I saw your brother's camp."

The next day, watching from the lodge, Akaiyan and Little Beaver

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saw Nopastis coming to the island on the raft. They saw him land and walk along the shore, looking for his brother's bones. Then Akaiyan, with Little Beaver under his arm, ran to the shore and got on the raft. They were far out on the lake before Nopastis saw them. The older brother then realized that Akaiyan had power stronger than his own and had become a great medicine man.

When Akaiyan reached the tribal camp, he went at once to the head chief's lodge and told his story. All the people received him with honor when they learned of the wisdom and power that had been given him by the Beavers. He gathered together a Beaver Bundle just as the Beaver Chief had directed. All winter he and Little Beaver taught the people the songs, prayers, and dances given him by the Beaver family.

When spring came, Akaiyan invited all the animal people to add their power to the Beaver Bundle. Many animals and birds of the prairies and of the mountains offered their skins and taught him their songs, prayers, and dances to accompany the skins, just as the Beavers had done. Elk and his wife each gave him a song and a dance, as did also Moose and his wife. Woodpecker gave three songs with his dance. Of all the animal people, only Frog could neither dance nor sing, and therefore is not represented in the Bundle. Turtle could not dance and had no song, but he borrowed from Lizard, who owned two songs.

The following spring Akaiyan returned to the island with Little Beaver. He saw his older brother's bones on the shore and knew that the Beavers had not helped him. The Beaver Chief gave him a warm welcome. And when he gave Little Beaver back to his father, the Chief was so grateful that he presented Akaiyan with a sacred pipe and taught him the songs, prayers, and dances that belonged with it. When he reached home, Akaiyan added the sacred pipe to the Beaver Bundle.

Every spring Akaiyan went across to the island to visit his friends the Beavers, and each time the Beaver Chief gave him something to add to the Beaver Bundle. Akaiyan led the Beaver Medicine Ceremony as long as he lived, and he was known as a great medicine

man. When he died, the ceremonial was continued by his son, and it has been handed down ever since.

Lewis and Clark among the Shoshonis

THE FOLLOWING STORY was related to Warren A. Ferris of the American Fur Company in 1831. He wrote that it was told by a Flathead Indian, but a comparison with the journal of Captain Lewis reveals that Ferris was in error about the tribe. Most of the details in the story parallel Lewis's account of a band of Shoshonis whom he found in August, 1805. They were then living along a little river on the west slope of the Rocky Mountains and were the people of Sacajawea. There were four men in the explorers' scouting party, not just two. Lewis found the Shoshonis poverty-stricken but cheerful, even gay.

A GREAT MANY SNOWS past, when I was a child, our people were always in fear of the Blackfeet. They had firearms, and we had none. We knew nothing about guns except their effects. Often they attacked us when we went on the plains to hunt buffalo. With their thunder and lightning they killed many of our bravest warriors, but they never came in reach of our arrows. Sometimes their young warriors closed in with us and were defeated, but their friends never failed to repay us fourfold, from a safe distance.

One time when we were in the buffalo country, we saw our best warriors falling around us almost daily for several moons. But we were never able to avenge their deaths. Goaded by thirst for revenge, we often rushed forth upon our enemies. They retreated as we advanced, and so remained at the same distance, where our arrows could not reach them.

At last Big Foot, the head chief of our tribe, gathered his warriors in a council and made a speech to them. He reminded them of their helplessness before their enemies, and he persuaded them to leave the country and to find a safe retreat in the mountains.

Next morning, the sun shone upon a deserted camp. Our people were leaving the beautiful plains. For one whole moon we traveled southwestward, over winding trails and over mountain areas where there were no trails. We went through a gap in the mountains and down to a river that flows toward the setting sun.

There we pitched our camp. The women found plenty of roots and berries. Our hunters went out in safety and came back with plenty of game. Others found that the river was alive with salmon, which the women dried for use in winter. Our fears were forgotten. We smoked in peace around our council fires and heard the stories of long ago.

But after several snows—I don't know how many—our fears returned. Two strangers appeared suddenly. They were unlike any people we had ever seen and wore clothing unknown to us. They

gave us things like solid water, which were sometimes as brilliant as the sun and which showed us our own faces. At first we were delighted by the men's appearance, for we thought that they must be the children of the Great Power Above. But soon we were afraid. We learned that they also knew how to make thunder and lightning. We learned that a party of beings like themselves were but a day's march behind them, on the east side of the mountains. They were coming up the Beaverhead River.

Many of our people were terrified. They felt sure that the strangers were in league with our enemies and that together they were coming to attack us. When the white men asked us to go with them to meet their friends, our people at first refused. But our chief believed that they might possibly protect us from our enemies. "Our retreat has been found," he said in a speech to the council. "Let us make friends with these strangers who are so terribly armed."

Some of his warriors decided to follow him, but the women were still afraid. As their men disappeared over a hill near the camp, the women set up a doleful wail. They felt that they were saying farewell forever, and the spirits of the men sank within them as they went.

But when they reached the Beaverhead River, they found only a small party of men like the ones with them. All treated them with great kindness and gave them many things they had never dreamed existed.

Our chief noticed that the strangers were careless about their belongings. They did not seem to know about theft. So he warned his men that they must not steal anything, not even a small thing, from the white men. His men obeyed.

Then the strangers went back over the mountains with the chief and his men. They were made welcome in our camp, and there was joy among our people. They stayed with us for several days. Ever since, my people have been friends of the white men.



Lewis and Clark Among the Flatheads

OF THE COMING of the Lewis and Clark Expedition among the Flatheads, Private Joseph Whitehouse wrote on September 4, 1805: "Two of our men who were a hunting came to their lodges first. The natives spread a white robe over them and put their arms around their necks as a great token of friendship. Then they smoked with them. When Captain Lewis and Captain Clark Arrived, they spread white robes over their shoulders and smoked with them. . . . But we could not talk with them as much as we wish, for all that we say has to go through six languages before it gets to them."

Pierre Pichette related the first of the following Flathead traditions of the event.

OUR PEOPLE WERE CAMPED in a kind of prairie along the Bitterroot River, a few miles upstream from the Medicine Tree. The place is called Ross's Hole now; the Indians then called it *Cutl-kkh-pooh*. They kept close watch over their camps in those days and always had

scouts out because they feared an attack by an enemy tribe. One day two scouts came back to report that they had seen some human beings who were very different from any they had known. Most of the strangers had pale skins, and their clothing was altogether different from anything the Indians wore.

"There were seven of them," the scouts told Chief Three Eagles (*Tchliska-e-mee*). "They have little packs on their backs, maybe provisions or clothing."

The chief immediately sent his warriors to meet the strange men and to bring them to camp safely.

"Do no harm to them," he warned his men. "Do no harm to them at all. Bring them to me safely."

So the strangers were brought into the camp. All the tipis were arranged in a circle in our camps, with an open space in the center. The people gathered there in the middle of the camping place, and so, when the warriors brought the strange men in, they were seen by the whole tribe. The Indians could not understand who the seven men were, but they knew they were human beings.

Chief Three Eagles ordered buffalo robes to be brought and to be spread in the gathering place. By signs, he told the strangers to sit on the robes. The men were a puzzling sight to all the Indians surrounding them.

After the white men had sat down, they took their little packs off their backs. The chief looked through their packs and then began to explain to the people.

"I think they have had a narrow escape from their enemies. All their belongings were taken away by the enemy. That's why there is so little in their packs. Maybe the rest of the tribe were killed. Maybe that is why there are only seven of them. These men must be very hungry, perhaps starving. And see how poor and torn their clothes are."

The chief ordered food to be brought to them—dried buffalo meat and dried roots. He ordered clothing also to be brought to them—buckskins and light buffalo robes that were used for clothing.

One of the strange men was black. He had painted himself in

charcoal, my people thought. In those days it was the custom for warriors, when returning home from battle, to prepare themselves before reaching camp. Those who had been brave and fearless, the victorious ones in battle, painted themselves in charcoal. When the warriors returned to their camp, people knew at once which ones had been brave on the warpath. So the black man, they thought, had been the bravest of this party.

All the men had short hair. So our people thought that the seven were in mourning for the rest of the party who had been slaughtered. It was the custom for mourners to cut their hair.

By signs, Chief Three Eagles and his counselors came to a little understanding with the white men. Then the chief said to his people, "This party is the first of this kind of people we have ever seen. They have been brought in safely. I want them taken out safely. I want you warriors to go with them part of the way to make sure that they leave our country without harm."

So by the chief's orders, a group of young warriors accompanied the white men to the edge of the Salish country. They went with the strangers down the river from Ross's Hole and up to Lolo Pass. The white men went on from there.

They did not take with them the robes and clothing Chief Three Eagles had given them. Perhaps the white men did not understand that they were gifts.¹

THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT of the coming of the first white men into the Flatheads' country was written in 1899 by Father D'Aste of St. Ignatius Mission, Montana. He recorded it from a reliable old Indian who had heard it from the widow of Chief Victor, the famous chief

¹ Sophie Moiese, interpreted by Louis Pierre, told essentially the same story. She added a few details: When the dried meat was brought to the men, they just looked at it and put it back. It was really good to eat, but they seemed to think it was bark or wood. Also, they didn't know that camas roots are good to eat. . . . Chief Three Eagles told his people that they must not harm the strangers in any way. Since then, no one has ever heard of the Salish tribe and whites getting into battle. During the Nez Percé War, the Nez Percés went through the Bitterroot Valley, but the Salish people stood by the whites at Fort Missoula. They would have fought their own Indian friends to keep them from harming the white people.

with whom Governor Stevens negotiated the reservation treaty of 1855. Chief Victor was the son of Chief Three Eagles.

➤ ONE TIME WHEN the Flatheads were camping at Ross's Hole, Chief Three Eagles left the camp to do his own scouting. He feared that some enemy Indians might be sneaking near the camp, intending to steal horses. At a distance he saw a party of about twenty men traveling toward his camp. Except for two chiefs riding ahead, each man was leading two pack horses. Chief Three Eagles was puzzled by the appearance of the strangers, for never before had he seen men not wearing blankets. Perhaps they have been robbed, he thought.

Returning to his people, he told them about the strange beings. He gave orders that all the horses should be driven in near camp and watched. Then he went back toward the party, hid himself in the forest, and watched them approach.

He saw that they were traveling slowly, without any suspicious behavior. The two leaders would ride ahead, seeming to survey the country, and then would go back and consult with their men.

"They must be two chiefs," Three Eagles thought. "But what are they after? And why does one of their men have a black face? Who can he be?"

The Chief puzzled about the black man. Among his own people it was the custom to have a war dance if, on a buffalo hunt, they should see any sign of their enemies hiding around. For this dance, the warriors painted themselves—some with red, others with yellow, others with black. While dancing, they would encourage each other to fight bravely. This black man, thought Chief Three Eagles, must have painted his face black as a sign of war. The party must have fought with their enemies and have escaped, losing only their blankets.

Once more the chief returned to his camp and reported to his people.

"They are traveling in our direction," he said. "Let us keep quiet and wait for them. They seem to have no intentions of fighting us or of harming us."

So he and his people watched and waited. The strangers approached

The Black Robes and the Coeur d'Alénes

slowly, still showing no hostile intentions. When they came near the camp, the two leaders got off their horses and walked toward the people, making signs of friendship. They shook hands with Chief Three Eagles. Then all the Indian men shook hands with all the white men.

"Bring the best buffalo skins," said the chief, "one for each man to sit on. Bring the best buffalo robes, and put them over the men's shoulders."

The two leaders saw that the Indians were smoking a strange plant. They asked for some and filled their pipes. But they did not like it. "It is no good," they said.

Cutting some of their own tobacco, they asked the Indians to fill their pipes with it. But the Indians did not like it. It made all of them cough, and everybody laughed. Then the two leaders, making signs, asked for some kinnikinnick. They mixed the leaves with their own tobacco and gave the mixture to the Indians. The Indians liked it. So the people smoked together.

Seeing that everybody was friendly, the white men decided to camp there near the Indians. As they unpacked their horses, they explained with signs that they had blankets in their packs, used only for sleeping. So they gave back the robes.

The white men were very strong. Some of them carried on their shoulders very large logs to use for their campfires.

Our people and the white men continued to be friendly. On the third day they started off. We showed them how to get to the Lolo fork trail, which is the best way to get to the Nez Percé country on the west side of the mountains.



INDIAN
LEGENDS
OF THE
PACIFIC
NORTHWEST

BY ELLA E. CLARK

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT BRUCE INVERARITY

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An old woman in a Clatsop village near the mouth of Big River mourned because of the death of her son. For a year she grieved. One day she ceased her wailing and took a walk along the beach where she had often gone in happier days.

As she returned to the village, she saw a strange something out in the water not far from shore. At first she thought it was a whale. When she came nearer, she saw two spruce trees standing upright on it.

"It is not a whale," she said to herself. "It is a monster."

When she came near the strange thing that lay at the edge of the water, she saw that its outside was covered with copper and that ropes were tied to the spruce trees. Then a bear came out of the strange thing and stood on it. He looked like a bear, but his face was the face of a human being.

"Oh, my son is dead," she wailed, "and now the thing we have heard about is on our shore."

The old woman returned to her village, weeping and wailing. People hearing her called to each other, "An old woman is crying. Someone must have struck her."

The men picked up their bows and arrows and rushed out to see what was the matter.

"Listen!" an old man said.

They heard the old woman wailing, "Oh, my son is dead, and the thing we have heard about is on our shore."

All the people ran to meet her. "What is it? Where is it?" they asked.

"Ah, the thing we have heard about in tales is lying over there." She pointed toward the south shore of the village. "There are two bears on it, or maybe they are people."

Then the Indians ran toward the thing that lay near the edge of the water. The two creatures on it held copper kettles in their hands. When the Clatsop arrived at the beach, the creatures put their hands to their mouths and asked for water.

Two of the Indians ran inland, hid behind a log awhile, and then ran back to the beach. One of them climbed up on the strange thing and entered it. He looked around inside it. He saw that it was full of boxes, and he found long strings of brass buttons.

When he went outside to call his relatives to see the inside of the thing, he found that they had already set fire to it. He jumped down and joined the two creatures and the Indians on shore.

The strange thing burned just like fat. Everything burned except the iron, the copper, and the brass. The Clatsop picked up all the pieces of metal. Then they took the two strange-looking men to their chief.

"I want to keep one of the men with me," said the chief.

Soon the people north of the river heard about the strange men and the strange thing, and they came to the Clatsop village. The Willapa came from across the river, the Chehalis and the Cowlitz from farther

north, and even the Quinault from up the coast. And people from up the river came also—the Klickitat and others farther up.

The Clatsop sold the iron, brass, and copper. They traded one nail for a good deerskin. For a long necklace of shells they gave several nails. One man traded a piece of brass two fingers wide for a slave.

None of the Indians had ever seen iron and brass before. The Clatsop became rich selling the metals to the other tribes.

The two Clatsop chiefs kept the two men who came on the ship. One stayed at the village called Clatsop, and the other stayed at the village on the cape.

THE ORIGIN OF THE ROOT FESTIVAL

A traditional ceremony still observed by Indians in some communities in the Pacific Northwest was held in the spring when the first roots were ready to be dug. In the late spring and summer, the roots of several plants were dried and used in a variety of ways—in soups, for porridge, and for bread. The root festival, held in April, is sometimes combined with the first-salmon ceremony, which has been described briefly in "How Coyote Helped the People."

This account of the origin of the root festival was told by Chief Jobe Charley, a Wasco on the Yakima Reservation.

Long ago, our people went up to the sky every feasting time. There they sang and danced and gave thanks to the Great Spirit for the roots and berries on the earth.

One time Speelyi, the red fox, and Tooptoop, his brother, went up to the sky with the people. All sang and danced and prayed for several days. Speelyi became so tired that he dropped down and fell asleep. Finding him and recognizing him, the people threw him down to the earth, where he belonged.

His brother Tooptoop kept on with the thanksgiving ceremony. After a while he thought of Speelyi down on the earth and went to him with some bitterroot, camas, huckleberries, and salmon. Speelyi had a big feast.

When he had eaten all he could eat, Speelyi raised his hand to the east and made a new law. "My people, no more will you go up to the sky to feast and to give thanks. Many new people are coming to our land, and so we cannot do all that we are used to doing. We must share with our new friends. We must learn to bear our hardships and our sorrows as best we can.

"I am going to put bitterroot and camas and other roots in different parts of the country. You will have feasts here every year. When you begin to dig the roots in the spring, you will sing and dance and give thanks to the Great Spirit. You need not travel up to the sky for that. And as you dig the roots, you will sing songs of thanksgiving. Your children will learn the songs from you.

"I am Speelyi. I have spoken."

And so that is why my people had a root festival every spring, when they began to dig the roots we used for food.

WHY THE COLUMBIA

SPARKLES

Five stars once came down from the sky and slept beside the river, near The Dalles. Next morning four of them rose into the air and took four sisters back to the sky with them. When the sisters got to the place where the stars live, they saw that the sky world is just like this one, with grass and flowers.

The oldest of the five stars did not go back with the others, because he was still tired from the long journey. He remained lying there on the ground by the river, but he changed himself into a white flint rock, very large and thick and round and bright. It shone so brilliantly that it could be seen from a long distance.

It became a good-luck rock for the Wishram people who lived near it. The star rock brought many salmon up the river, enough for the Wishram to dry for their own use and also to trade with the people who came to the narrows and to the big falls of the river. The place where the rock lay was a great gathering place for many tribes. Everyone knew the star. The Wishram became known as the Star people.

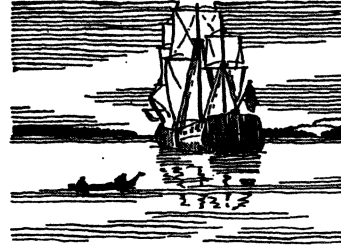
Across the river on the south side lived the Wasco people. They did not have a star, but they did have a big cup. *Wasco* means "those that have the cup." Near their main village was a rock in the shape of a big cup. Into it bubbled a spring of pure, cold water. The Wasco people prized the cup very highly.

The Wasco, who were always quarreling and fighting with their neighbors, became jealous of the good luck the bright star was bringing the Wishram. One night when the Wishram people were away, some of the Wasco people crossed the river and stole the star. They wrapped it in an elk skin and threw it into the river.

When the Wishram returned from picking berries, they could not find the star. Months later, when the water of the river was low, some people of the Wishram village saw it shining on the bottom. They got it and put it back on the shore. Always thereafter, someone guarded the star. But three summers later, when the Wishram were again in the Mount Adams country picking berries, Wasco men found the guard asleep one day and stole the star once more. This time they broke it into pieces and threw it into the river.

When the Wishram came back to their winter village, the star rock was gone. Angrily they crossed the river and made war on the Wasco. Some of the young men pounded the big cup until they almost destroyed it. It had been very large and deep. It is now very small.

After the star was stolen and broken, the Wishram lost the name Star people and became very common people. But the broken star rock is still in the river. That is why the water sparkles in the sunshine.



THE FIRST SHIP

Indians told explorers and early settlers in Oregon about several shipwrecks and landings which seem to have occurred a generation or two before Captain Robert Gray discovered the Columbia River in 1792. The Indian traditions are supported by these facts, among others: in 1806, Lewis and Clark found near the mouth of the river an Indian with freckles and reddish hair, and they saw beeswax in the hands of natives; in 1811, Gabriel Franchère talked with an old man near the Cascades who said that his father, a Spaniard, had been wrecked at the mouth of the river; several tons of beeswax, including a few tapers, have been found buried along the Oregon coast. The following Chinook tradition was recorded in 1894.