

The Bird Whose Wings Made the Wind

Micmac

An Indian family resided on the sea-shore. They had two sons, the oldest of whom was married and had a family of small children. They lived principally by fishing, and their favorite food was eels.

Now it came to pass at a certain time that the weather was so stormy they could not fish. The wind blew fiercely night and day, and they were greatly reduced by hunger. Finally the old father told his boys to walk along the shore, and perhaps they might find a fish that had floated ashore, as sometimes happened.

So one of the young men started off to try his luck in this line; when he reached a point where the wind blew so fiercely that he could hardly stand against it, he saw the cause of all the trouble. At the end of the point there was a ledge of rocks, called Rocky Point, extending far out; at low water the rocks were separated from one another by the shallow water, but were nearly all covered when the tide was in.

On the farthest rock a large bird, the storm-king, was standing, flapping his wings and causing all the trouble by the wind he raised. The Indian planned to outwit him. He called to the big bird, and addressing him as "my grandfather," said, "Are you cold?" He answered, "No." The man replied, "You are cold; let me carry you ashore on my back." "Do so," was the answer.

So the man waded over to the rock on which the bird was sitting, took him on his back, and carefully carried him from rock to rock, wading over the intervening spaces of shoal water. In going down the last rock, he stumbled on purpose, but pretended that it was an accident; and the poor old bird fell and broke one of his wings. The man seemed very sorry, and immediately proceeded to set the bone and bind up the wing.

He then directed the old fellow to keep quiet and not move his wings until the wounded one healed. He now inquired if it pained him much, and was told that it did not. "Remain there and I will visit you again soon, and bring you some food." He now returned home, and found that the wind had all died away; there was a dead calm, so that before long they were supplied with a great abundance of food, as the eels were plenty and easily taken. But there can be too much even of a good thing.

Calm weather continued for a succession of days, causing the salt water to be covered with a sort of scum. The Indians say it is the result of sickness and vomiting among the larger fish; this scum prevents the fishermen from seeing into the water, and consequently is adverse to eel-spearing.

This took place on the occasion referred to, and so they sought for a remedy. The big bird was visited and his wing examined. It was sufficiently recovered to admit of motion, and he was told to keep both his wings going, but that the motion must be steady and gentle. This produced the desired effect.