

AN INDIAN LEGEND.

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All the legends of the Indians are filled with extravagant accounts of the exercise of magic. Animals are endowed with human powers, and men can assume the form and habits of beasts, birds and fishes at will. Certain tribes are named from the animals. We hear of the Whales, the Bears, the Beavers, the Porcupines, the Crows, the Eagles, the Birch-partridges and the Spruce-partridges, &c.; and when these tribes, or individuals of them, are referred to, there is a constant confusion of natures—the parties being one moment spoken of as animals, and immediately after as human beings.

One of the strangest ideas conceivable is that of the parties being able at will to hide their lives, the soul or animating principle, and in this way to render their bodies invulnerable. In this way one of Longfellow's heroes in the "Song of Hiawatha" escapes being killed, even after his body has been pounded to pieces.

"Six tall hunters, lithe and limber,
Bore him home on poles and branches,
Bore the body of the Beaver;
But the ghost, the *Jeebi* in him
Thought and felt as *Pau-Puk-Keewis*,
Still lived on as *Pau-Puk-Keewis*."

So in the Micmac legends. Two *Boo-owins* (magicians, *powows*) may be together apparently on friendly terms, but very suspicious of each other. They sleep together in the same wigwam; but one is so distrustful that before going to sleep he takes the precaution to hide his soul—the *Jeebi* in him—out in some secure place and then goes to sleep. Meanwhile his adversary watches, and when the other is soundly asleep, he quietly cuts off his head, and, to make sure work of it, he chops him into fine pieces. In due time the murdered man awakes, and finding himself scattered about, picks himself up and puts the pieces together, and brings in the

mchejakunuch, which makes all right again, though he may feel a little sore for a time. To all of which nonsense a figurative meaning may be easily attached, and even a distorted view of the scripture doctrine of the Resurrection.

In the legend that follows, all these points are strikingly brought out. We have a "man-whale," a "man-sheep" and a "man-goose," and an ugly "ogre," who steals all the newly-married young women, carries them off to a cave, which is guarded by whirlwinds and tempests, and who keeps his soul hidden in a sevenfold iron chest at the bottom of the sea; but who is finally overcome and vanquished.

It may be objected to the tale that the principal actors in it are evidently white men, and that we have a king and a queen, soldiers, silver, horses and carriages, and that the "sword of sharpness," the "invisible coat" and the "shoes of swiftness" are so manifestly of European origin as to spoil the interest of the story as a purely Indian fiction.

I would observe, in reply, that no one, it seems to me, would think of palming off as a genuine Indian legend, a story of his own invention, which abounded in these references to civilized life. The only plausible supposition is, that the Indians originally heard the tale from the white people. This question I cannot decide; but if any one will produce the story, that will satisfactorily settle the point—and settle it, too without essentially injuring the interest of the fiction. I can affirm positively that I am not the author, but simply the translator of the story. I wrote it down from the mouth of an intelligent Indian, and wrote it down in Micmac as he related it, and he assured me that it was one of their old *ahtookwokun*, and, as he supposed, of genuine Indian authorship.

Nor can it be deemed strange that