

## THE TALEAK OF THE SOOSOOON.

*Being the Micmac Legend of How the White Bark of the Birch Tree became Covered with Innumerable Pink Marks: What they Serve to Indicate and Who Put Them There.*

IT was many round moons before Glooscap fled away westward at the coming of the white man's big canoes, that those who passed along the shores of the inland lakes first felt the bite of the sticky black fly, and marvelled at the newly-acquired pink lines upon the silvery white bark of the birch trees. When men asked the sakumous the meaning of these things they told them that the marks upon the birch was writing ordered by the Great Spirit himself—the word is Soosoon in our tongue—and that Glooscap would tell them why it was thus made manifest. And even so did he unto them, and from father unto son has been handed the story that I now tell to thee.

Now, in those days there lived a certain widower whose name has been forever banished from our lips, by reason of the thing which he did, and only spoken under the title of the sakumou of the evil spirits called Mendon. This Mendon had one little son named Najumooktakunechk, who was secretly fed by the bats with blood from his own kinsfolk, by reason of which he grew stronger than most men and was able to see in the night time.

At last there came the day when this Mendon, the father of Najumooktakunechk, grew weary of hunting, and so he stored away an abundance of oil in a sack of moose-skin, and hung it from the door-post of his wigwam, so that all men might know it belonged to him alone. And Mendon slept by day and by night, and only awoke when he grew hungry for a drink of oil from the huge sack.

But Najumooktakunechk grew so quickly that he was a man before he had even gained his moose-skin mocasins; and one day he stole his father's war feathers and put them upon his own

head, and journeyed many days towards the big sweet river until he came to a village of the mountain Indians, whose sakumous name was Onbogegechk.

Now, this Onbogegechk had a beautiful squaw, called Ulgedoo, and two little sons, and had purposely led his people among these hills so that there would be no need of fighting the battle of each feast with the other tribes. And they were all grown very fat and lazy, and kept no watch along the water-courses. So Najumooktakunechk was able to lie concealed behind a rock and listen to their speeches. And when the sun spirit had covered his camp-fire with earth he crept forward—for, by reason of the bats' nursing, he was able to see by night as well as day—and killed every soul in camp, excepting only Ulgedoo and her two



AFTER MICMAC ART—NAJUMOOKTAKUNECHK.