



## Peeguis, The Otchipwe.

STRAITS of the Spirit, Manito-aba,  
Home of a happy people, bold and free,  
Within thy borders lived a warrior-chief  
Whose name and fame shall last through many years;  
Peeguis, the conqueror, whose word was law,  
The able man, the wise man from the east,  
Who, pushing westward, brought his people here,  
And conquered all this land, and made a home  
Beside the *Miskwagamiwi-sibi*, —  
Red River, silty-water, *Winnipee*,  
That ever northward, through old burying-grounds,  
Flows with its load of silt, brought from afar  
To build up deltas as the Nile has done.  
No torrid heat dries out thy reedy ranks,  
No dread Sahara lines thy wooded banks,  
Be thou the mother of an Egypt here,  
Queen of vast fertile plains, Canadian Nile!

Here Peeguis found a river full of fish,  
Winding its wooded way through endless plains

Dark-dotted with brown droves of buffalo;  
Where medicine, and fruit, and *pakinak*,  
Flourished untended, and the fertile soil  
Promised abundance of *mandaminak*,  
If once the corn were buried in the mould,  
Although forgotten until harvest time.  
Here, in this myriad-speaking solitude  
Great Peeguis made a realm, and here he reigned,  
Descendant of the mighty Pontiac,  
Whose name adorns that other strait Detroit;  
Blood of a hundred heroes in his veins,  
Himself a hero and a gentleman.  
He always proved himself the white man's friend,  
Friend of the *monias*, the ignorant man,  
Who could not throw a spear nor bend a bow,  
The bearded pale-face from *Wabanakim*,  
A region thenceforth known as *Moniang*,  
The land where men come from who do not know.  
Peeguis had pity on the *Monias*,  
And soon discovered they knew many things  
Which all *Anishinabeg* well might know:  
They found in books, *masinaiganan*,  
So many things about the earth, *akki*,  
And *ispeming*, the mighty vault above,  
That Peeguis begged them to remain with him,  
And teach the people all they did not know.  
He gave the first who came Saint Boniface,  
The place they chose on the Red River's banks,  
Where from the west the dark Assinniboine, —  
*Assini-bwan*, the stony-stubborn tide, —

Blends with the larger flood its troubled stream.  
Thus would the peoples blend in amity,  
One people as one river, till at length,  
Depositing the sediment of life,  
They wander different ways into the sea  
Down by the deltas of *Mitewaukee*.

Here, in the place called Peeguis after him,  
An eager student from the distant east  
Where Selkirk, Peeguis' bosom friend had lived  
Before he came to Manito-aba,  
From where the Micmac and the Maliseet  
Dwell in the highlands of *Megamagee*,  
Has journeyed far that he may study here  
The people and the language Peeguis loved;  
To know the grandsons of the warrior-chief,  
And be a brother to them in their home.

Chief William Henry Prince, the active man,  
Son of *Miskogineau*, great Peeguis' son;  
The most successful hunter in the band,  
The boldest and most careful voyageur,  
Who risked his life to spike Fort Garry's guns,  
And did the deed at Middleton's command  
One stormy night amid the sleet and rain  
When war-clouds threatened to destroy his home.  
On arm and side he bears two ugly scars  
From rebel bullets when he fought with Riel,  
And, ever foremost, broke within their lines,  
Then rode his wounded steed until it fell  
In service of his Country and his Queen.

He is a man whom rugged men admire,  
Well chosen Chief for what he was and is,  
Know him, and know that you have met a man.

See John approach, pride in each springing step,  
*Iandaweway*, echo that resounds,  
Grandson of Peeguis, cousin of the Chief,  
Stately and strong at eighty-one years old,  
And loyal to his Country and his King;  
We meet his brothers, *Neganwawetum*,  
Called Joseph now, but still the thunderstorm;  
And David, foot-ball, *Wembewabenun*,  
Who in the service of the H. B. C.  
Had traded years among the stubborn *Bwan*,  
Like them becoming a wild-hearted man;  
Who served his church as catechist, and taught,  
True to his name of *Wembewabenun*.  
We talk about the old mythology:  
Gods good and evil dwelling everywhere,  
While over all, and hopelessly removed,  
*Ketche Manito*, (mighty spirit he),  
Dwelt in the forests of *Milewaukee*.  
We talk of God who is *jawenjigay*:  
*Keshay Manito*, (gracious spirit he);  
We read *Ketche Masinaigan*, then,  
The Book of Books, the word of God to men;  
And then we talk of words in common use,  
Of *akki*, *gijik*, *tawin*, *ispeming*,  
*Tebihkut*, *oonagooshen*, *ishkooday*,  
*Wassakwenenjigun*, *neskijik*, too, —

Earth, sky, home, and the mighty void above,  
Night, evening, fire, lamp, and eye to see.  
We build lame phrases and weak sentences, —  
*Bo-shoo, neche; anin 'nekamegak?* —  
Good day, my friend; pray tell me what's the news?  
*Ketche sanagad Otchipwemoian,* —  
Most difficult is the Otchipwe tongue;  
And then the curtain of the evening falls  
Beside the *Miskwagamiwi-sibi*.

The old men say this river's name was changed  
From Winnipeg to *Miskwagamiwi*,  
Because its ample stream was red with blood  
When, after fearful slaughter, victory  
Perched on the banners of the warrior-chief  
In that great battle where the sun went down,  
And the wolves gathering gorged themselves with gore,  
Thy murmuring waters speak of mystery;  
Dark is thy bosom as thy child the Cree;  
As Nubians to the Nile are they to thee,  
Deep-flowing *Miskwagamiwi-sibi*.

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