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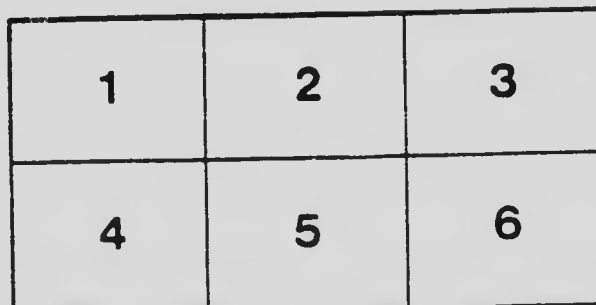
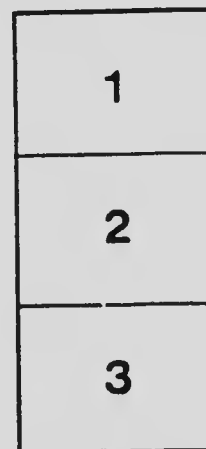
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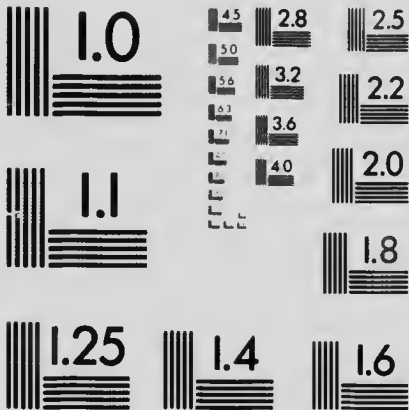
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“It was not safe for a warrior to so much as show his nose outside of his hiding-place”

(See page 45)

1410

Flying Plover

HIS STORIES, TOLD HIM BY SQUAT-BY-THE-FIRE



BY
G.E. THEODORE ROBERTS

Author of "The Red Feathers," "Hemming, the Adventurer," "Captain Love, etc."

ILLUSTRATED & DECORATED BY
CHARLES LIVINGSTON BULL

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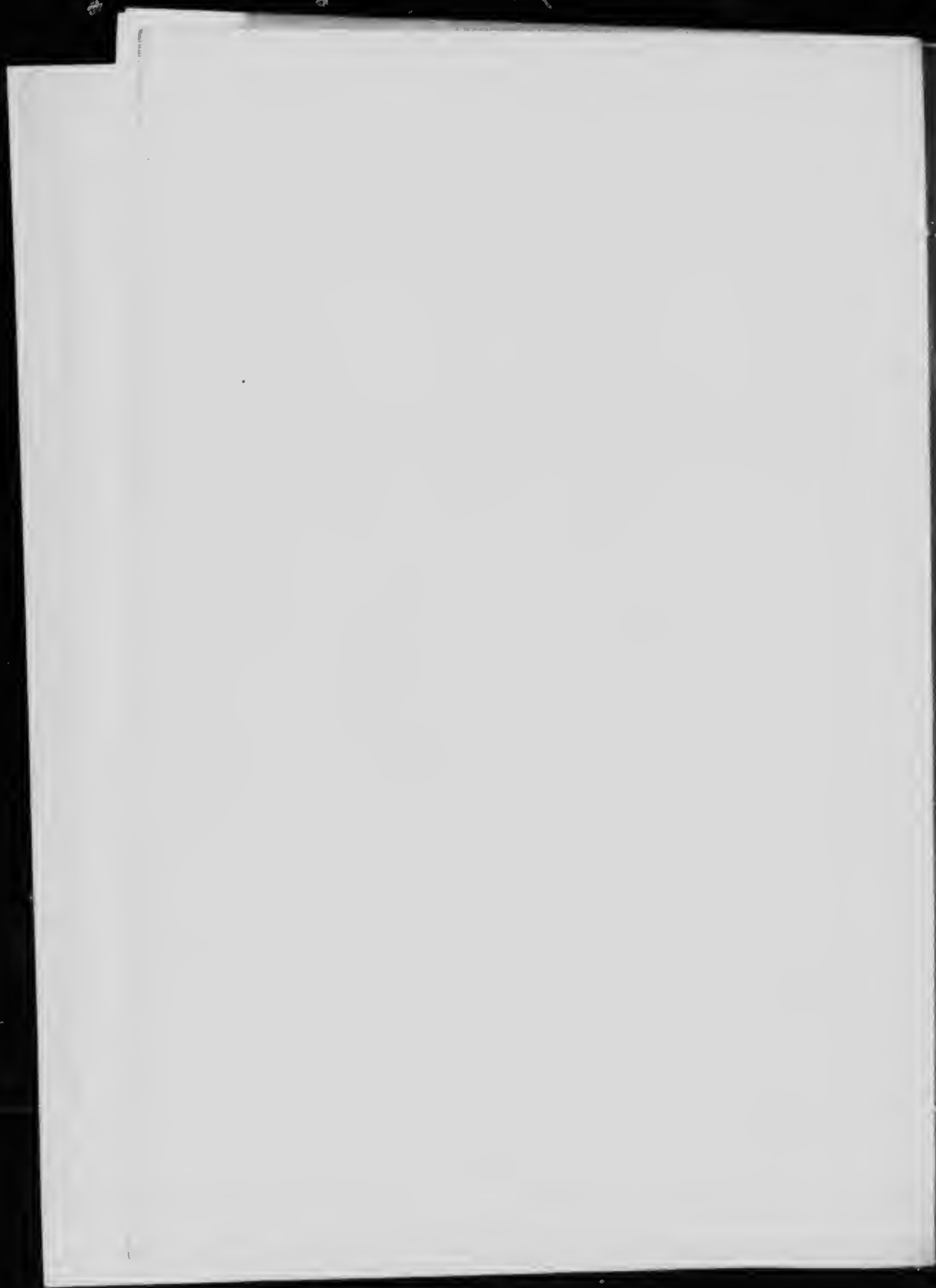
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FLYING PLOVER

I

THE MOUNTAINEER PEOPLE

BOTH of Flying Plover's parents had died when he was a little baby, and ever since — for six long years — he had lived with his grandmother. The old woman's name was Squat-by-the-fire. She was the wisest person in the tribe, in spite of the fact that an old man who lived in another village said that he knew twice as much as anybody else in the whole world. She was deep in medicine and history and story-telling. She could paint fine pictures on bark and cured skins, and was skilful in the carving of wonderful little figures in wood

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and bone and walrus ivory. She knew so much, and looked so wise, and had such bright eyes, that many of the tribesmen believed that she was a magician.

The tribe that Flying Plover and his grandmother belonged to lived far north, in that bleak and unexplored country called Labrador. They spent the summer months near the coast, where they fished in the great bays for cod and seals, and in the rivers for salmon and trout. They traded with the few white settlers and missionaries, and with the Eskimo people. At the approach of winter they traveled inland, with the great herds of caribou, into the sheltered valleys of the mountains. As the winter is a

THE MOUNTAINEER PEOPLE

much longer season than the summer, in that country, these people spent the greater part of every year in the mountain forests — and so they are called the Mountaineer Indians, or the Mountaineers. But this book is not about the tribe, but is full of the stories that old Squat-by-the-fire told to little Flying Plover, in the long winter evenings.

You can not sit by the old woman's fire, and smell the herbs she was always steeping, and play with the little figures which she carved so cleverly, as Flying Plover could; yet I hope you will like her stories, for all that.

II

THE BEAR, THE MOOSE, AND THE WALRUS

THE other children of the village were afraid of Flying Plover's grandmother, because of her bent back, and wrinkled face, and bright dark eyes. Though she had never so much as said a harsh word to any one of them, and though her medicines had saved the lives of many of them, yet they would never follow Flying Plover into the big lodge where she sat all day by the fire, steeping her fragrant herbs and thinking of all manner of wonderful things. They said that she could turn a little boy, or a little

girl, into any kind of animal or bird in the world, without any more trouble than snapping her fingers. That was nonsense; but some of the men and women believed it, too. Magicians were not very rare things in that region (at least to people who believed in them) and you were just as likely as not to think that you saw one every time you went out for a walk. But Squat-by-the-fire was not a magician, and could not have turned a little boy, or a little girl, into a bird or a four-legged animal if she had snapped her fingers for fifty years. She was just an old, good, and very clever woman; and though she loved little children and was glad to be able to make medicines for them, she really was not sorry that

they did not all run in and out of her lodge, with the freedom of her grandson. Flying Plover had learned her ways and wishes and never disturbed the pots by the fire or the big jars in the corner; but she knew that the other children, once they felt at home, would knock things about at a terrible rate. And she was far too old and busy to begin to teach deportment to all the children of the village. But Flying Plover never caused her any trouble, and was not in the least afraid of her.

One evening, when the raw-hide door of the lodge was fastened tight, and the fire burned cheerily and smokily on the earthen floor, and the wind moaned outside, the old medicine woman asked, "What

games did you play to-day, little son of Swift Runner?"

"We played at battles," replied Flying Plover; "and they put me on the Eskimo side, and so I was taken prisoner, and fastened to a tree. I did not see much fun in that; so I made up another game, something like deer-hunting, and we played that until it got dark. But I like battles best, except when I am an Eskimo. Do the Eskimos always get beaten in the real battles?"

"Our people have not been at war with the fat blubber-eaters for a long, long time," replied the old woman. "We used to battle with them every summer; but it was a foolish thing to do, and brought a great deal of sorrow and suffering

to both peoples. When my father was a young man, our warriors used to chase the Eskimo warriors as the timber wolves chase the young caribou. But the missionaries have taught us that killing and robbing are terrible sins — and I think people should have known that before. So now, when we want sealskins and fish, we do not fight and rob, but we trade instead. That is better, for it does not call for the shedding of blood, the burning of lodges, and torture and starvation, as of old. Now the blubber-eaters are a weak people; but hundreds and hundreds of seasons ago they were a great nation. But that was far beyond the reach of my father's memory. They were a mighty people though,

THE BEAR, MOOSE, AND WALRUS

once upon a time; and then our nation was nothing more than a few weak villages. We were afraid of the blubber-eaters then, and never went down from the mountains. The Eskimo warriors chased our warriors then, when they saw them, even as the timber wolves chase the young caribou. So it is with men and tribes and nations, little son of a chief. I have seen something of it, even with my own eyes. The Eskimo people were the great people; and next the Mountaineers were mighty in battle; and now both the fat men of the ice and the hunters of the mountains know that the white missionaries and the white traders are their masters."

"That is very strange," remarked

Flying Plover. "The white men do not look like great warriors, and they are very few in number."

"It is the mind," said old Squat-by-the-fire, touching her wrinkled forehead with a gnarled finger. "'T is the light inside the skull that gives the mastery; though to listen to the story tellers, one would believe that all the power lies in the biggest club and the straightest arrow. The minds of the white men are full of knowledge, and caution, and courage. That is why they are now the great people."

"They feed their brains with fine sweet puddings. I think that is why they are able to talk to our people so big and make the little Eskimo boys go to school," said Flying Plover.

The old woman laughed ; but it was not at her grandson's remark. She was thinking of the oldest story she had ever heard.

“ There was a time, more than ten thousand summers ago, I should think, when men were such weak, dull-witted creatures that they had no mastery over anything but the smallest animals and birds,” she said. “ Oh, yes, that was a very long time ago, ages and ages before the white man had ever been heard of. The animals were the masters, in those days, and it is a wonder that the poor, frightened creatures that ran on two legs, and hid in caves and holes, kept alive at all. Then, the wolves were as big as black bears, and the bears stood as high as caribou, and the

foxes were as big as timber wolves. When a hunter saw a fox, in those days, he was glad to climb a tree; and he was lucky if a caribou did not come along and knock the tree over with its head. Or may be an eagle would catch sight of the man, and swoop down and pick him out of the tree with its claws, as if he weighed no more than a little brook trout."

"I am glad I did not live in those days," said Flying Plover. "If all the beasts were too big to kill, and there were no white men to buy blankets from, what did people do for clothes to wear?"

"There were the hares," replied the old woman. "They were six times as large as they are now, but not much more dangerous unless

they were cornered. And sometimes the bravest hunters managed to kill a beaver or a musquash. Even the mice were well worth hunting in those days, and one fat mouse made a very good dinner for a small family. Oh, it was a queer world, you may be sure!"

Old Squat-by-the-fire ceased her talk for a little while and opened a leathern bag at her belt. From it she drew a wooden pipe, a knife, and a plug of dark-brown trade tobacco. Soon the pipe was filled and lit, and the blue smoke curling about her head.

"Did they have any tobacco in those days?" asked Flying Plover.

"No — nor fire to light it with," replied his grandmother.

The little boy was greatly as-

tonished at that, and could not think how people warmed themselves in winter, or cooked their dinner. He was just opening his mouth to ask about a dozen questions, when the old medicine-woman, noticing it, hurried on with her talk.

“The king of the frozen north was a great walrus. His tusks were as long as a canoe paddle and his head as big as this lodge. He lived in a house built of icebergs, and was not afraid of anything in the world. This country had two kings. One was a white bear, as big as a trading schooner, and the other was a bull moose as tall as the highest spruce tree in the forest. When the moose was without his horns he went far



"He left his hiding-place and chased the bear"



THE BEAR, MOOSE, AND WALRUS

away to the westward and hid himself in a deep valley—and then the white bear was king of all this country. But every year, as soon as the moose felt that his horns were full-grown again, he left his hiding-place and chased the bear hundreds of miles out of his kingdom. So they went on, year after year, until, at last, King Walrus heard about it. Being a walrus he did not like white bears. The dislike was born in him, for, of course, he had never had any trouble with bears himself.

“‘I have no doubt that the moose is the rightful ruler of that country,’ he said. ‘I’ll just make a journey into that region and set the matter right.’

“Of course what he really

FLYING PLOVER

meant was that he would take the country for himself. He was growing ambitious. He felt that such a mighty chief should rule the whole world. So one fine day in winter, just after King Bear had sent King Moose trotting westward to his hidden valley to grow a new pair of horns, up waddled King Walrus. The bear was five times as large as white bears are now; but old King Walrus was ten times the size of the walruses of to-day. King Bear saw at a glance that he was not big enough to fight with his unexpected visitor. Knowing that all walruses are the enemies of all bears, he did not have to think very hard to find a reason for the northern king's visit. His eyes grew red as the fire with

the anger that burned in his brain; but what he said was, 'I am highly honored and unspeakably delighted at seeing you in my poor country.'

"'Hump,' grunted King Walrus, — for his manners were no better than the manners of any other walrus, and, into the bargain, he was quite short of breath from his overland journey in from the coast. King Bear saw that his only chance of keeping things pleasant was in being polite. He would give his visitor some valuable gifts, too.

"'This is an unexpected pleasure,' he continued. 'I was never so honored before in all my life. I am deeply moved by your condescension.'

"By this time King Walrus had

recovered enough breath to talk with. 'You will be moved still farther before very long,' he said. Then he laughed roarily, for he had a very coarse sense of humor and enjoyed nobody's jokes but his own. The bear was bright enough, you may be sure, and usually approved of jokes, but he did not laugh that time. He became so angry that he forgot all his caution.

"What are you bellowing about, old blubber-sides?' he snarled.

"Hey! What was that you called me?' roared King Walrus, changing his tune very quickly.

"You may bellow as loud as you choose,' replied the bear, 'but you can't frighten me with noise.'

"He was so angry that he was

utterly reckless. White bears have very hot tempers, as you know.

“I called you old blubber-sides,” he continued. ‘I’ll call you worse names than that, if you don’t go away from my country. You smell like rotten fish! Go away! Go away!’

“King Walrus was far too angry to reply to these insults in words. His great sides shook with anger as the sea shakes with storm. Like a mountain lurching from its place, he floundered after King Bear at the top of his speed, bellowing all the while like summer thunder. The earth groaned and trembled—and King Bear ran like a frightened hare. He ran all day and all night; and not until then did the bellowing of old King

Walrus fall to silence behind him. Then he sat down and growled and groaned and snarled, so enraged was he at finding himself an outcast from his own country. At last he became quieter and began to use his wits.

“‘Old blubber-sides is too big for me,’ he said — ‘and I think the Moose will find the same trouble, when he gets back. But here is a country that does not look as if anyone governed it. I’ll be king of this country.’

“It was a very dreary looking land in which the big white bear now found himself. He had never seen it before; and he had run so fast and so blindly that he really did not know by what course he had come or in what part of the

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world he was. He went to the top of a hill and looked all around him. Nowhere was there any sign of woods or water or sea-ice. On every side, and right away to the edge of the sky, lay rounded, treeless hills and wide, dreary barrens all covered with snow. The sight made the bear feel dreadfully grumpy, for nowhere could be seen any movement of life—any promise of dinner. And he was so hungry, after his long run, that his stomach felt as if it contained a lump of ice.”

III

ADVENTURES OF KING BEAR CONTINUED

OLD Squat-by-the-fire ceased her talking and, with tender care, knocked the ashes out of her pipe into the palm of her left hand. She gazed narrowly at the ashes, before blowing them into the fire.

"That was good tobacco," she said. "Every little bit of it turned into smoke. Indian tobacco was not so good; but just to think that there once was a time when people didn't have any fire, even to light their pipes and warm their bones at. That must have been much worse than not having any tobacco."

"Or to cook their dinners at," said little Flying Plover. The old

woman nodded. Her bright eyes were on the fire, and she was deep in meditation. Flying Plover watched her in silence for fully two minutes. Then he said, "I think King Bear was in King Walrus's country."

"You are wrong. But it is time for you to go to bed," said Squat-by-the-fire.

"I am not sleepy. Please tell me some more about King Bear," begged the little boy.

"Well," said the old woman, "he stood on the top of the hill and growled and roared, just as loud as he could, to see if anything would hear him and come to find out his trouble. Presently a crow appeared out of the gray sky, and alighted on the snow.

“‘You are making a horrible noise,’ said the crow. ‘What’s the matter with you?’

“‘I am hungry,’ replied the bear. ‘Who is king of this country?’

“‘We have no king. This country is ruled by the people,’ said the bird.

“‘Oh!’ remarked King Bear, and scratched his ear. He had never in all his life heard of a country without a chief or a king. ‘It looks like a poor sort of place. Where are the people?’

“‘Here come a few of them now,’ said the crow, turning his head over his shoulder. Sure enough, there were six wolves and two black bears approaching the hill at a fast run.

“‘They don’t seem to be at all



“ ‘ Here come a few of them now,’ said the crow ”



afraid of me,' said King Bear, gruffly. 'And yet I am big enough to kill them all with one of my paws.'

"'You are very big,' admitted the crow. 'You are the biggest bear I ever saw—and you seem to be colored wrong, too. But that is neither here nor there. We do not think much of size in this country.'

"'Oh, don't you?' snarled King Bear. 'Well, perhaps you'll change your views before very long. And what do you mean by saying I am colored wrong?'

"'Black and brown are the correct colors for bears,' said the crow. 'Dirty white looks both foolish and untidy.'

"Just then the six wolves and

the two black bears reached the bottom of the hill. There they halted, and one of the wolves cried out, 'What are you doing here, big stranger?'

"I am sitting on the top of a hill, admiring your beautiful country,' replied the white bear, in a snarly voice.

"What do you want?' asked the wolf.

"Something to eat,' said the white bear.

"Where did you come from?' asked the wolf.

"You miserable creature, I came from my own country where I am king,' roared the bear. 'And I want you to know that I did not come here to answer your questions! Bring me something to

eat — a fat caribou, or a couple of seals — or I'll try my teeth on you!

“Your talk is as big as your body; but neither big words nor big bodies are much thought of in this country,” replied the wolf.

“King Bear was astonished at the wolf's daring in speaking to him so impudently. He had never been spoken to in that way before by any common animal or bird. Of course King Moose, his rival, had said rude things to him every year; but that was to be expected and was between kings. But it made his blood bubble in his brain to hear such words from that ordinary wolf, and to see the other common creatures, and the crow grinning at the talk. He was so

angry that he almost forgot the hungry-pain in his stomach.

“‘I am a great king,’ he roared, and got to his feet, ready to destroy the six wolves and the two black bears with one sweep of his mighty right paw. But he did not do it! He saw something running on the snow, so fast that he could not make out what it was—and suddenly it stopped close under his great nose and he saw that it was a slim young man. He was so astonished that he squatted back on his haunches.

“‘I have been listening to you,’ said the young man, ‘and I do not like your talk. Also, I do not like your looks. You are too big and too bold to be a safe companion for my people.’

“King Bear could do nothing but stare.

“‘I am Gluskap,’ continued the young man, ‘and all the men and animals in this land, for seven times as far as you can see in every direction, are in my care.’

“‘I never heard of you,’ said the big white bear.

“The young man smiled at that. Then he pointed his finger at the stranger and gazed at him very hard with his bright eyes.

“‘I feel queer. My head spins ’round and ’round,’ said the bear. He began to sway from side to side. He stood on his four strong legs; but still he swayed and swayed, and his mouth hung open and he breathed very hard.

“‘What — are — you — doing — to — me?’ he gasped.

“‘I am reducing you,’ replied the young man.

“King Bear did not know what that meant — and he felt so queer that he did not care. All the white world seemed to go whirling around him. At last he fell over, flat on his side. And as soon as that had happened he felt quite well again and jumped to his feet. Well, he blinked his red eyes and he glared and glared, for it looked to him as if the man, the crow, the wolves, and the black bears had all grown much larger. But that was not what had happened at all. The change was in himself and not in the others. Gluskap, with his magic, had

made him smaller and smaller until he was just exactly the size of white bears now and smaller than common black bears were in those days.

“Now that you are a small bear and not at all dangerous to the peace of this country, you may come with me and have something to eat,” said Gluskap. “And if you behave yourself I think my people will be kind to you and let you live in this country. Come, it is dinner time.”

“He turned toward the south and walked slowly away. Then the white bear followed him, wondering to find himself so mild and obedient. The other animals followed, too, and the crow flew on ahead. One of the wolves walked beside the white bear.

“‘The crow told me that this country was without a king,’ said the bear. ‘But that man is your king, surely!’

“‘Oh, now, he is one of the gods,’ said the wolf. ‘He feeds us, and keeps our enemies from harming us. Is that what kings do for their people?’

“‘I never heard of a king doing things like that,’ replied the white bear. ‘But what does he feed you with?’ he asked, for again he felt the hungry-pain in his stomach — and though he was so much smaller now, the pain felt just as big as when he was his old size.

“‘Just whatever you want,’ said the wolf. ‘His lodge is behind the next hill, so you will soon know as much about it as I know. All

the men and animals and birds are here by now, I think, waiting for their food. Don't you hear them talking?' Oh, yes the white bear heard them talking. It sounded just like the running of sea waves up and back along a pebbly shore. And now the scents of that hidden multitude reached his keen nose. He smelt every kind of living creature he had ever smelled before in all his life, except fish and seals. He knew that men were there, beyond the hill, and moose, caribou, bears, wolves, foxes, otters, wild-cats, mink, porcupine, red deer, woodchucks, hares, mice, beaver, muskrats, badgers, and all kinds of birds.

“‘Hah, that smells good,’ he said, and sniffed very hard. ‘That

certainly smells like a fine dinner. I'll be puzzled to know what to eat first. A fat beaver would not be bad to start with, as there does not seem to be any kind of fresh fish.'

“‘You are all wrong. You will not be allowed to eat any of those animals. They are waiting for their dinners just as hungrily as you are; and what would they think, do you suppose, if Gluskap allowed you to kill them and eat them?’

“‘Then what on earth are we going to eat?’ asked the white bear.

“‘You'll soon find that out for yourself,’ replied the wolf.

“Gluskap led the way straight up the side of the steep hill. There,

on the other side, stood a great lodge of poles and bark, surrounded by several hundred men, thousands of animals, and great flocks of birds settling down and flying up and lighting again. The white bear gazed at the scene in astonishment. There stood wolves and caribou side by side, and hares and wild-cats lay together on the snow.

“ ‘Why don’t they fight?’ he asked. ‘Why don’t the bears and wolves eat the silly little men and the fat hares and beavers?’

“ ‘No need of it,’ said the wolf. ‘It is easier to eat Gluskap’s food.’

“ Now they halted at the edge of the crowd. They saw Gluskap walk into his great lodge. Soon

he came out with a basket in one hand. He walked among the men and animals, scattering on every side something that looked like sand. The moment those little grains touched the ground, each one became a piece of food. A grain that dropped in front of a beaver became a juicy fragment of pond-lily root. The grains that fell before the caribou turned into bundles of caribou-moss. The grains that fell near the bears and wolves and men became meat and fish of many kinds. Well, it was the most wonderful thing that the white bear had ever dreamed of ; and when he suddenly found a big, fresh salmon and a lump of beaver flesh under his very nose, he was too happy to do anything but eat and eat."

Old Squat-by-the-fire ceased her story-telling, leaned back against a heap of robes and blankets, and closed her eyes.

"Did Gluskap make all the food out of sand?" asked Flying Plover.

"Yes. Now you must go to bed, little son of a chief."

"Did King Bear stay with Gluskap?"

"Yes. Go to bed now, Flying Plover."

"Did n't he ever go back to his own country?"

"Perhaps he did. I don't know. Go to bed."

"What happened to old King Walrus?"

"I won't tell you to-night. Go to bed!"

“Did King Moose come home and fight him?”

“Go to bed! Go to bed! Go — to—bed!”

So, at last, while the fire still burned brightly, little Flying Plover went to bed under a soft robe of furs—and with most of his clothes on too. But his grandmother sat up for an hour or two longer, and smoked another pipeful of tobacco.

IV

HOW FIRE CAME TO THE MOUNTAINEERS

FLYING PLOVER was awake bright and early next morning, and went right out in the cold and snow to get wood for his grandmother's fire. The men of the village always kept the old medicine-woman's wood pile well supplied—so the little boy had no chopping to do, but just carried armfuls of dry sticks into the lodge. Though it was nearly breakfast time, the sun was not yet up; but a narrow yellow band edged the horizon in one place, and in the faint twilight several people besides Flying Plover were moving about out of

doors. Some were getting wood, and some were carrying water from the hole in the frozen brook. Big Hunter, the chief of the village, was feeding frozen fish to his sledge-dogs; for he and his sons were going to make an early start in search of caribou. The air was very still and cold, and the tall trees which stood all around and among the lodges snapped in the frost. Little Flying Plover was too cold to even shout out to his friends. This was the part of the day which he did not like—the short time before the fire was lighted and breakfast was cooked. So he worked very fast, running backward and forward between the lodge and the wood pile. His task was soon done; and soon the fire

FIRE CAME TO THE MOUNTAINEERS

burned cheerily in the middle of the lodge, the smoke streamed up to the peak of the roof and out into the frosty air, and the old medicine-woman put the tea-kettle and the frying-pan on the coals.

After breakfast, Squat-by-the-fire gave her little grandson a lesson in moccasin-sewing; and after the lesson she kept him at work at making a pair of moccasins while she steeped medicines. For a little while in the afternoon he worked at carving a caribou from a block of wood; but it was hard work, and he cut his finger; and after a whole hour of scooping and cutting, the thing still looked more like a block than a caribou. He almost cried. In fact, two tears rolled out of his eyes and half-way

down his fat cheeks before he remembered that warriors do not weep and hastily wiped them away with the back of his hand. His grandmother did not let him know that she had seen the tears; but she tied a piece of rag around his cut finger and told him to go out and play with the other little boys.

That night, old Squat-by-the-fire told Flying Plover some more about King Walrus, and about a man called Porcupine Killer.

“When King Moose returned to this country,” she said, “with his fine horns all ready for knocking King Bear about, and found old King Walrus here instead, he was not at all pleased with the change. One look at the big walrus told

him that he had met his master, horns or no horns. But he was full of courage and felt that right was on his side — so with a snort of rage he tried to roll King Walrus from the hill on which he lay, sleeping soundly. But he might as well have tried to roll the hill from under King Walrus. There was a short and terrible fight — and then poor King Moose limped away and lay down in a distant forest to think the matter over. He hid in the forest for many days and asked every animal and bird that came within speaking distance where King Bear had gone to. But not one of them could tell him that. All they knew was that he had been chased out of the country by the

old blubber-mountain from the north. The moose was very sorry that no one could tell him where his rival had gone to. He thought that he and King Bear together could drive King Walrus back to his own country. But as there seemed to be no chance of finding the bear, he continued to live quietly in the distant forest. For exercise, he knocked the great pine trees over with his horns. None of the other animals were big enough for him to fight with—and King Walrus was too big.

“The walrus did not stay in this country very long; but while he was here, men suffered even more than they had suffered before. The reason for this was that a great many fierce animals

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from the north had followed their king into this country. The whole land was full of bears and wolves and giant foxes; and people — mountaineer people — died of hunger in their caves because the men were afraid to go out and hunt. It was not safe for a warrior to so much as show his nose outside of his hiding-place. If things had gone on in that way for another moon, I think the whole tribe of mankind in this country would have starved or been killed — and if that had happened you and I would not be sitting here to-night.”

“Where would we be sitting?” asked Flying Plover.

“We would not be sitting anywhere. We would never have

been born," replied the old woman.

"Why not?" asked the little boy.

But Squat-by-the-fire knew that if she answered any more of his questions he would keep her busy all night. So she hastened on with her story.

"There was a young man named Porcupine Killer," she continued. "He had once killed a porcupine with only a flint knife for a weapon—and porcupines in those days were larger than bears are now. That is how he got his name. But the porcupine had been eaten years ago, and now he was not able to go out and kill even a mouse. You need not laugh at that, for mice were then

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as big as beavers are now — and just as good eating, too. He knew that if he went ten yards from the narrow mouth of his cave some great animal would leap upon him. He had a wife and little baby; and all the three had eaten for two days was part of a fish that a hawk had accidentally dropped in front of the cave as it flew over, chased by an eagle. He could not think of anything to do. When night fell he would creep out and feel about for some bones. With so many great animals killing and feeding on all sides there would surely be plenty of fresh bones lying around. He had seen a pack of great wolves chasing a giant caribou along the valley below his cave early that

morning. If he could find the bones of that caribou he would be lucky. The marrow in one of those bones would supply them with many meals. But as he had to wait until night to begin his hunt and had nothing to do in the meantime, he lay down on a bed of dry leaves and fell asleep.

“A wonderful dream came to Porcupine Killer while he lay asleep in his dark cave, with his belt drawn tight around his stomach because of the hungry pain. Some good spirit must have come and whispered that dream into his brain, for in it there was hardly one thing like anything he had ever seen; and yet it was all just as if he looked down at some-

thing that was really happening. He saw a place of flat, white sand (at first he thought it was snow, for there is no sand so white in this country) with the sea at one edge of it, green as leaves in Spring and blue as the sky, and strange-looking bushes along the other side. On the sand, mid-way between the trees and the edge of the beautiful sea, stood a man. Porcupine Killer had never before seen such a queer-looking man. His skin, all over his face and body, was as dark as the roof of this lodge where the smoke has painted it. He was naked as a trout. At his feet lay a bunch of dry grass and a heap of little sticks. In his hands he held something that looked like a very short bow with a doubled,

twisted cord made of some kind of vine, and a piece of dry, flat wood. He sat down on the sand, crossed his legs, crumbled a little of the dry grass between his hands and placed the powder close beside him, on the sand. Then, holding the flat piece of wood firm between his knees with his left hand, he placed the cord of the bow in a notch across it and began to draw it swiftly back and forth, back and forth, quick as lightning. The spirit of Porcupine Killer (for it did not seem to him that his body was in the dream at all) bent close above the queer-looking black man, eager to find out what he was trying to do. The stranger worked and worked, his hand flying back and forth so fast that it could

scarcely be seen. The sweat stood out on his black skin. Soon a faint, blue mist crept up from the notch in the slab of dry wood—or was it from the flying cord of twisted vine? It floated up and melted in the sunlight; then it floated up again; and again it melted to nothing. Porcupine Killer could make no sense out of it; but he liked the look of the dry, blue mist. The worker now clutched the wood tight between his knees, keeping his right hand still speeding with the bow, and with the fingers of his left hand took up a pinch of the grass-powder and sprinkled it where the cord of vine flew along the notch. Now the blue mist arose in a little cloud, and climbed high above the

worker's head before it melted. It had a smell—a smell that seemed very good to the spirit of Porcupine Killer. His nose had never met with anything like it before, and yet it awoke a strange craving within him, and seemed to speak of comfort and safety.

“Still the strange man went on with his strange work, driving the bow back and forth with his right hand and sprinkling a little of the powder of dry grass with his left. Suddenly the mist puffed white and thick, and in a moment faded to something so faint that it had no color at all, and yet seemed to waver upward and melt away, even as the mist had floated and melted—and, in the same instant, a living thing, yellow and bright

and no bigger than a baby's finger, moved on the flat piece of wood.

“It was like a bright, strange bird. It was like a beautiful flower that bursts suddenly into bloom and life from a husk of bray seed. It was like magic!—like the eye of a god!—like the secret of life! At least so it seemed to Porcupine Killer. Nothing before, except the feelings of love and courage, had ever awakened so much joy in him.

“‘What is it? Give it to me,’ he cried; but his spirit had no voice, and the man on the sand did not so much as turn his head. He was still busy with the magic thing that had so suddenly come to his hand. Now he ceased the movement of the bow and let it

fall on the sand, where it lay unheeded, with a faint mist arising from the cord of twisted vine. He fed the yellow, living thing with leaves of the dry grass, and it grew and leapt under his hand. Suddenly he turned to the little bunch of dry grass at his elbow—and, quick as thought, every fiber of it had blossomed to red and yellow. Now, from the heap of twigs and sticks, he fed that wonderful, leaping thing that had flashed into life but a few moments before, no larger than a baby's finger, and that now covered a space on the sand as wide and long as a snow-shoe track."

"What was it?" asked little Flying Plover, in an awed whisper.

"It was fire—fire like that,"

replied the old medicine-woman, pointing at the glowing coals and leaping flames within the circle of stones in the center of the floor. For a moment the child looked puzzled, and glanced at his grandmother to see if she were laughing at him. Then he nodded his head.

“Yes, the fire is alive,” he said; “but why did the queer, black man rub the bow across the flat piece of wood?”

“There were no matches in those days such as the traders sell now,” replied the old woman. “And fire could not be struck out of the flint as it was when I was young, because there was no steel with which to strike the flint. All these things that I am telling

you happened a very long time ago, little son of a chief."

Again Flying Plover nodded his head.

"And then what did the queer man on the sand do when his fire was burning so well?" he asked.

"I do not know what he did," replied Squat-by-the-fire, "for just when the sticks were crackling and the flames leaping high as the flames of our own fire, the spirit of Porcupine Killer flew back to his body and poor Porcupine Killer opened his eyes and found himself lying on the bed of leaves in his dark, narrow cave. And the hungry-pain gnawed him again, and he heard his wife crying beside him as she rocked the little baby in her arms. But there was

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a lightness in his heart that had not been there when he fell asleep, and his dream was as clear as a picture in his mind. He got up quickly from his bed of leaves and dry moss, and crawled to the back of the cave where some of his bows and spears were stored, along with several pieces of seasoned wood for the making of arrows. Without telling the woman a word of his wonderful dream, he broke one of his bows in two pieces. But the string of caribou sinew was not what he wanted. He felt about in the dark, and soon found some strands of tough hemlock root which he had once used for snares. Finding three strands of a length, he plated them together into one

thick, tough cord — and with this he strung a piece of the broken bow.

“‘What are you doing?’ asked his wife.

“‘Perhaps you shall soon see. Have patience,’ he replied. The poor woman thought that hunger and despair had weakened his mind. But she stopped her weeping and drew near to him, the better to see what he was about. Having fixed a short bow to suit him, he broke across his knee many of the sticks and slabs of seasoned wood, from which he had intended to make such fine arrows. Across the flat side of one of these pieces he scraped a shallow groove with his stone knife. When that was done, he collected ten handfuls of dry

moss and grass from his bed. Some of this he powdered between his hands, as he had seen the strange, naked man do in his dream. Then, when all was ready, he sat on the cold floor of the cave and began to draw the cord of the bow swiftly back and forth across the flat piece of wood, just as the black man had done. He worked and worked—and at last his nose caught the smell of the blue mist, though he could not see the mist because of the darkness of the cave. But he saw beautiful, bright sparks darting along the groove in the wood. By that time, his right arm ached as if it had been twisted and beaten with a club; but he kept the bow flying, and began to sprinkle the powdered grass with

his left hand. Then (as he had seen in his dream) the small creature of magic life—the bright, yellow thing that ate the powdered grass and sprang upward for more—flashed into being on the slab of wood between his knees. The squaw uttered a low cry of wonder; but Porcupine Killer said not a word. He fed dry moss and grass to the wonderful thing—and it grew, and flashed with a redder color. Then, doing what he had seen the naked, black man do, he slipped it from the wood to the heap of dry stuff at his side. The bright tongues leapt upward, throwing a beautiful light into every corner of the cave. The mist, which seemed to be its breath, streamed along the top of the cave

and floated out through a hole in the rocky roof. The man heaped fragments of seasoned wood upon it, one by one. Then he felt the heat on his face and hands, and all through the chilly cave, like summer.

“‘Come close,’ he said to the woman. ‘It is warm as the sun when the willows have their leaves and the yellow butterflies swarm on the sand by the river.’

“‘What is it? What is this strange thing that you have made with your hands?’ whispered the woman.

“‘Nay, I did not make it. It is the gift of some kind god, bestowed on me while I dreamed,’ replied Porcupine Killer. ‘Come close, and feel the comfort of it.

Do not fear it, for I am sure it is good. If it is not good, then why does the sight of it awaken joy in my heart?’

“The woman drew near, with her baby in her arms; and now, for the first time in her life, she felt the warmth of fire.

“‘It is like the sun in the spring time,’ she said. ‘It melts the chill of the frost out of my bones, and gladdens my eyes.’

“But Porcupine Killer did not answer, for he was busy feeding the new fire with all the wood he could find in the cave; and, of course, the fire grew and grew, and sent showers of sparks flying along the roof.

“‘It grows too fast,’ cried the woman. ‘You feed it with too

much dry wood. It may eat up the stone walls of the cave, if it grows any larger.'

"Just then, a spark dropped on the bed of grass and moss and leaves and, in a moment, a little flame began leaping here and there. But Porcupine Killer, who had a bright mind, saw the danger. He snatched up the burning stuff in his hands and threw it upon the big fire. The little flame touched his fingers. He cried out, with pain and surprise.

"'What is the matter?' asked the woman.

"'The magic thing stung me,' replied Porcupine Killer."

The old medicine woman ceased her talk and lit the tobacco in her pipe with a brand from the fire.

Flying Plover waited politely until he saw, by the clouds of tobacco smoke, that the pipe was well alight. Then, as his grandmother seemed to have forgotten to go on with the story, he said, "I wonder if that was truly the way fire first came to our tribe?"

Squat-by-the-fire glanced at him quickly, but never said a word. She knew that the little boy was trying to get her to go on with the story — and that was what she had not the slightest intention of doing. If she went on telling him stories as long as he would listen, neither of them would ever get any sleep, and her brain would become quite dry and brittle from too much inventing.

"I think Porcupine Killer must

have been sorry that he did not have anything to cook at his fine, new fire," remarked the little boy.

The old woman was just going to tell him that people did not know anything about cooking in those days—but she didn't. Flying Plover was clever; but so was she. Instead of saying the words that so nearly slipped from her tongue, she gave a raspy little cough. Then, in a faint whisper, she said, "My throat is so sore from talking so much, that I fear all the skin is worn off the inside of it."

That seemed a very strange and interesting thing to Flying Plover.

"Oh, let me see it," he cried. "How long will it take to grow on again?"

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His grandmother almost lost her temper at that. Anyway, she soon had him snug in bed; and it was not long before he was sound asleep.

V

HOW PORCUPINE KILLER LEARNED STILL MORE ABOUT THE WONDERFUL FIRE

DURING the night snow began to fall. In the morning the sky was still gray with it; and all day it continued to weave its gray curtains in the windless air. So little Fying Plover stayed indoors most of the day, cutting and gouging at the block of wood which he hopefully believed would soon resemble a caribou, and watching old Squat-by-the-fire at her medicine-work. The old woman did not talk much while she was mixing and attending to the pots of steeping herbs; but by mid-after-

noon she was ready to go on with the telling of her story. Her voice sounded quite natural again, and the little boy wondered that the skin had grown on it so quickly. But he said nothing about his wonderment, for he did not want to divert her from the story.

“When Porcupine Killer felt the burn of the fire on his hand he was frightened at first,” said the old woman, “but he soon recovered from his fright, and began to study the blazing sticks and red coals very attentively. He held out his hand, feeling the pleasant warmth. He advanced it closer and closer to the flames, noticing that the warmth increased and still increased the nearer he went, until at last it hurt. Then

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he touched a red coal with his finger—and that made him hop. He sucked his finger, and thought very hard. ‘It stings when you touch it,’ he said, ‘but if you do not touch it, it gives you warmth, like the sun in summer. If I take a stick in my hand, at the end where this wonder-creature is not eating, and thrust it against my enemy, then, without hurting me, it will sting my enemy.’

“‘Yes,’ said the squaw. ‘But look, it has eaten nearly all the wood, and is falling smaller and smaller, like a snowdrift in May,’ she added.

“Porcupine Killer thought of a dry, dead spruce tree that lay near the mouth of his cave, flat along the ground where a great

wind had thrown it a year before. But he was afraid to go out, unprotected, to break branches from this tree and drag them back to the cave. It was not yet night, and the giant beasts would be waiting for him. He saw one long stick in the fire that was burning for only half its length and, heeding a voice within him that told him to trust in the new gift of the gods, he took up the stick by the unscorched end, crawled through the mouth of the cave, and ran to the fallen tree. As he ran—'t was only the distance of a dozen strides—he waved the long stick around his head. It was twined 'round with red and yellow flames, and smoke and sparks flew upward from it.



“ He waved the long stick around his head ”



He saw two great wolves spring out of the forest on his left, glare at him with glowing eyes and gaping jaws, turn and flee back into the forest. He saw a fox (as big as a wolf of to-day) slink out of his path. Then he knew that this new and wonderful thing was as surely a terror to the beasts as it was a joy to him. They did not even wait for its sting. They fled, like hunted hares, at the sight of it! And he knew that this terror of it must have been born in the wolves and foxes even as the joy in it, and love of it, had been born in him. He leaned the burning stick against the trunk of the fallen tree and quickly tore off an armful of the dry branches. Leaving the flaming stick behind

him, he ran back to the cave and quickly replenished the fire. Again he returned to the tree and loaded his arms. Three times he made the short journey, swiftly, but without much fear of the beasts. He knew that many fierce animals were watching him; but his faith in their terror of the burning stick was great. When he crawled from the cave to get the fourth load of wood, a wonderful sight met his eyes. The flames from the stick had leapt into the dry branches of the tree and cloaked them in red and yellow. Swiftly it leapt from branch to branch until, in a twinkling, the tree was blazing along its whole length, from roots to crown. It made a loud crackling noise and a roaring like the voices of wind

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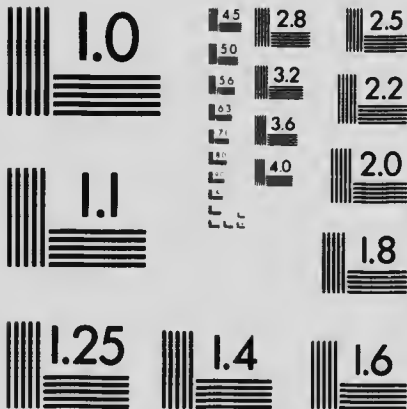
and water. Smoke and sparks flew upward in clouds.

“For a few minutes Porcupine Killer stood just outside the mouth of his cave and gazed at the wonderful sight with awe. The first thin darkness was creeping over the world, and in the gloom the flames and sparks and smoke made a terrible picture for eyes that had never seen such a thing before. But the little chill of fear quickly left his heart as soon as he began to reason with his brain. This creature — one moment so small, and suddenly so great — was his friend and the friend of all mankind. It was a wonderful gift that had been given to him in a beautiful dream. So he ran forward and stood as close



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to the fire as he could. The heat of it was very great—and the roaring of the flames and the crackling of the dry wood was loud in his ears. He knew that many eyes must now be staring at the great sight in fear and astonishment and wonder—eyes of his fierce enemies and eyes of his hunted, starving people. Many caves were in the same rocky hillside as his own. With his back to the noise and the leaping flames, he stood tall and brave against the terrible red light and waved his arms high above his head.

“‘Come to me, my people!’ he cried, with all the strength of his voice. ‘Come to me, and this magic thing will protect you from your enemies.’

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“Broken Arrow was the first to find courage to leave his cave and draw near to the fire. He was closely followed by Winter Morning, the chief. Porcupine Killer told them in a few words of his dream and how he had made the fire in his cave; of its comforting warmth; of its sting; and how the animals feared the sight of it. Soon a dozen men and boys stood near the blazing tree.

“‘Now is the time to hunt for food,’ said Porcupine Killer. ‘Do not go beyond the edge of the red light.’

“They found the body of a huge caribou, freshly killed by the wolves and but half eaten. They cut the flesh from it with their stone knives and axes, and

carried it to their caves. Porcupine Killer worked with the others and carried two great lumps of meat to his cave; but he kept his eye on the burning tree. He soon noticed that it was quickly lessening in size and heat. All the branches were gone and the great trunk alone glowed on the rocky ground. Flames and sparks still shot up from it in places, and here and there it had crumbled to masses of red coals. Dark night had fallen by now, and the light from the fire was drawing in, narrower and narrower, every minute. By the failing glow of it, Porcupine-Killer gathered a great many pieces of wood-roots and fallen branches and stumps, and heaped them close beside the mouth of his

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cave. He told Broken Arrow (who was a clever young warrior) and old Winter Morning, the chief, how fire could be kept inside one's cave and fed with sticks; and he lighted two long branches at the glowing coals and gave one into the hands of each. Many of the other men, seeing this and hearing Porcupine Killer's words, lit sticks for themselves and ran back to their caves, waving them in the air.

“ It was quite dark, and the great beasts were roaring and howling and barking on all sides, when the first man who had ever made fire in this part of the world returned to his cave.

“ He found the fire burning very low, — just a bed of coals, — for the woman was afraid to feed it with

sticks. He soon had it blazing brightly; and then, sitting very close to it, he began to cut one of the big lumps of caribou meat into small pieces, so that he and his wife might eat after their long hunger. One of the pieces fell close to the red coals at the edge of the fire. He did not notice it, but soon he began to sniff and look about on every side.

“‘What is that queer smell?’ he asked. ‘It is a smell that increases my hunger. What new thing have you in the cave?’

“The squaw told him that there was nothing new in the cave except the fire and the caribou meat. But she, too, noticed the smell and began to sniff and sniff. Her husband (who had not the baby to

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hold) was so attracted by the strange smell that he laid aside the flint knife and the big lump of meat and went sniffing around the cave, as a hungry dog sniffs around the outside of a store-house. But he was soon back at the fire again, where the smell was much stronger than anywhere else; and then he happened to see the small piece of meat that had fallen close to the red coals. Its color had changed. It was red no longer, but brown as a ripe nut; and from it floated up the smell that made him feel even more hungry than he had felt before. He touched it with his finger. It was very hot, so of course he stuck his finger in his mouth. Hah, but it tasted good! He had never really liked the taste

of flesh before, but had always eaten it quickly, in big mouthfuls, simply to fill his stomach; but this piece, that had been turned from red to brown by the fire, had a taste to it that made him think of eating with joy. With a small stick he drew it away from the hot coals, and soon the sting of the fire went out of it and he could hold it in his hands without feeling any pain. He cut it in two with his flint knife and gave one half to his wife. And they were the first people to eat roasted plover meat that I ever heard of. They liked it so well that they cut many more slices and placed them close to the red coals of the fire; and the good, hunger-making smell floated out of the cave and set all sorts of animals to

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sniffing and howling. They liked the strange smell, too (though they never learned to like it as well as the smell of raw meat); but they were afraid to go near the cave in the rocky hill-side from which the smell came, for out of that same cave shone the red glare of that terrible thing which had eaten up the dead spruce tree. They saw the same red glare at the mouths of other caves and what was left of the spruce tree still glowing angrily in the dark; so they crouched in a great circle and howled and roared."

Old Squat-by-the-fire stopped her talk suddenly, and began cutting tobacco for her pipe. Little Flying Plover sat very still, gazing into the fire. He could see all

sorts of queer things under the dancing flames, deep among the red coals—lodges, and hunters running beside dog-sledges, and warriors fighting mighty battles.

“Why were the animals afraid of the fire?” he asked.

“It was their nature to fear it,” replied his grandmother.

“Why did n’t it frighten the men, too?” asked the boy.

Squat-by-the-fire wrinkled her forehead and puffed hard at her pipe, but did not answer. Flying Plover waited for a minute, and then asked, “Are animals afraid of fire now?”

His grandmother nodded her head.

“But dogs are not afraid of it. Dogs like to lie by the fire,

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all day and all night," said the boy.

"Dogs were not always fond of fire. When they were wild — before they had been tamed by man — they did not like it at all," replied the old woman.

She puffed very fiercely at her pipe. "But you must not ask me any more questions now," she said. "I must boil the medicine for Red Cloud's baby again. It is a very great medicine and has to be boiled five times, in all, and let cool after each boiling. So you must not disturb me, little son of a chief. Carve at your caribou again, if the snow is still falling, and I will tell you another story to-night if you are a good boy."

VI

WHY OLD KING WALRUS WENT AWAY FROM THE MOUNTAINEERS' COUNTRY

FLYING PLOVER was a good boy. He carved at the stubborn block of wood until it looked quite unlike a block of wood and had four legs, like a caribou. Then he whittled away at two arrows, and mended one of his snowshoes. He did not once disturb his grandmother at her medicine-making; so after the evening meal the old woman said that, as he had behaved himself so well and worked so busily, she would tell him another story.

“I want to know why all the animals are smaller now than they

used to be," said the boy. "I want to know how that happened and when—and who did it."

"Easy, easy!" cried Squat-by-the-fire. "You go too fast with your 'want to know this' and your 'want to know that.' Stories are not told by the answering of questions. You will hear about the changing of the animals later—but to-night I am going to tell you why old King Walrus went back to his own country."

She scratched her head, and stared very hard at the fire, as if she found a good deal of difficulty in remembering the facts. And that is not to be wondered at, considering how long ago it was that King Walrus went away from Labrador, and how many queer

things had happened since then. Little Flying Plover often wondered at the way his grandmother remembered those very ancient happenings, and yet sometimes forgot little things that he could remember perfectly clearly. Well, she scratched her head, and stared at the fire—and, presently, she remembered.

“When King Walrus heard about the strange thing in front of the two-legged people’s hillside,” she said, “he floundered to the top of a near-by hummock and looked at it in wonder and with a queer feeling inside him. The queer feeling was fear—and King Walrus had never felt it before. He looked at the leaping flames and wondered if the sky had broken

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and the red sunset had fallen on the world. He looked at the smoke which poured up in black clouds and white clouds and blue clouds; and he thought that they, too, had fallen from the sky and were now hurrying back to it. And the sparks? Why, the stupid old fellow thought those were stars. His people—the smaller walruses and bears and arctic foxes that had followed him from the ice-fields—told him that the terrible creature was eating a tree just as they would eat a fresh cod-fish. They told him to listen, and they would hear it growling and cracking the dry wood with its red teeth. The old Walrus listened, and sure enough, he heard those terrible sounds. So it was certainly not the sky. ‘I

hope it will not stay in this country,' he said. 'Where did it come from?'

"A fox said 'One of the man-creatures carried it out to the dead tree from his den. It was very small at first — no bigger than my tongue—and danced on the end of a long stick. But it was frightful to look at, even then.'

"'Why did you not jump upon it, and kill it, when it was so small?' asked old King Walrus. But he did not speak in his usual loud voice.

"'I had not the courage,' said the fox. 'And I saw some animals, who are much larger and stronger than I am, turn around and run away, too,' he added.

"Old blubber-sides could not

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think of anything just then but the roaring fire in the valley below. Though he had believed, at first, that it was a piece of the red, sunset sky, now that he could hear it growling and biting the wood with its teeth, he felt sure that it was some terrible, new animal that would want to fight him as soon as it had finished eating the tree. But what had it been doing in the den of one of the little, miserable, two-legged men-folk? He lay there on the hummock and stared and stared, expecting, every moment, to see it move toward him.

“Then the fox who had spoken before said, ‘The same man who put it in the branches of the tree has another creature of the same kind in his den. I smelt it — and

I saw its breath rising through a crack in the rocks.'

"For a moment King Walrus turned his great head from the direction of the blazing tree and looked at the fox. 'Go down and examine it closely, and see if it has any legs,' he said. For a few seconds the fox did not know what to do or say, and felt very foolish. He was afraid of King Walrus — but he was much more afraid of the awful, new thing down in the valley. But his wits soon came back to him. He told the walrus that, of course, he would gladly obey his command; and he immediately started off at a brisk trot toward the burning tree. He kept on in that direction for about a hundred yards, and then, reaching

W WHY OLD KING WALRUS WENT AWAY W

a thicket of alders, he skipped in among the twisted stems, changed his course, and ran for fully a mile in a great half-circle. That brought him out on a hilltop at a safe distance from both the fire and the walrus, and yet in sight of both. Then he sat down comfortably to see what would happen.

“Well, as the wood burned away, and fell to coals and ashes, the great fire in the valley became smaller and smaller. Night grew dark over all the wilderness, save where the sparks broke from the bursting timber and the mouths of several of the men-folk’s caves shone red with the little fires within.

“‘See, it gets smaller and smaller, every minute,’ said King Walrus to his people. It is but a

poor creature, after all, and will soon be dead. It is nothing but some foolish little magic of the miserable two-legged people.'

"Then a wolf said, 'Yes, it may die, but I think it has cubs in every one of the frightened people's dens. And they will grow, quick as water running over a stone, and they, too, may have many cubs.'

"At last the flames ceased to dance at all on the ashes of the dead spruce tree, and the watching animals could see only a few red spots here and there. Hours went by, and still they sat on every hilltop overlooking the valley, howling and snarling and roaring, and staring with their wide, yellow eyes. At last they could see no sign of life at all in the fire. Then they shouted,

W WHY OLD KING WALRUS WENT AWAY W

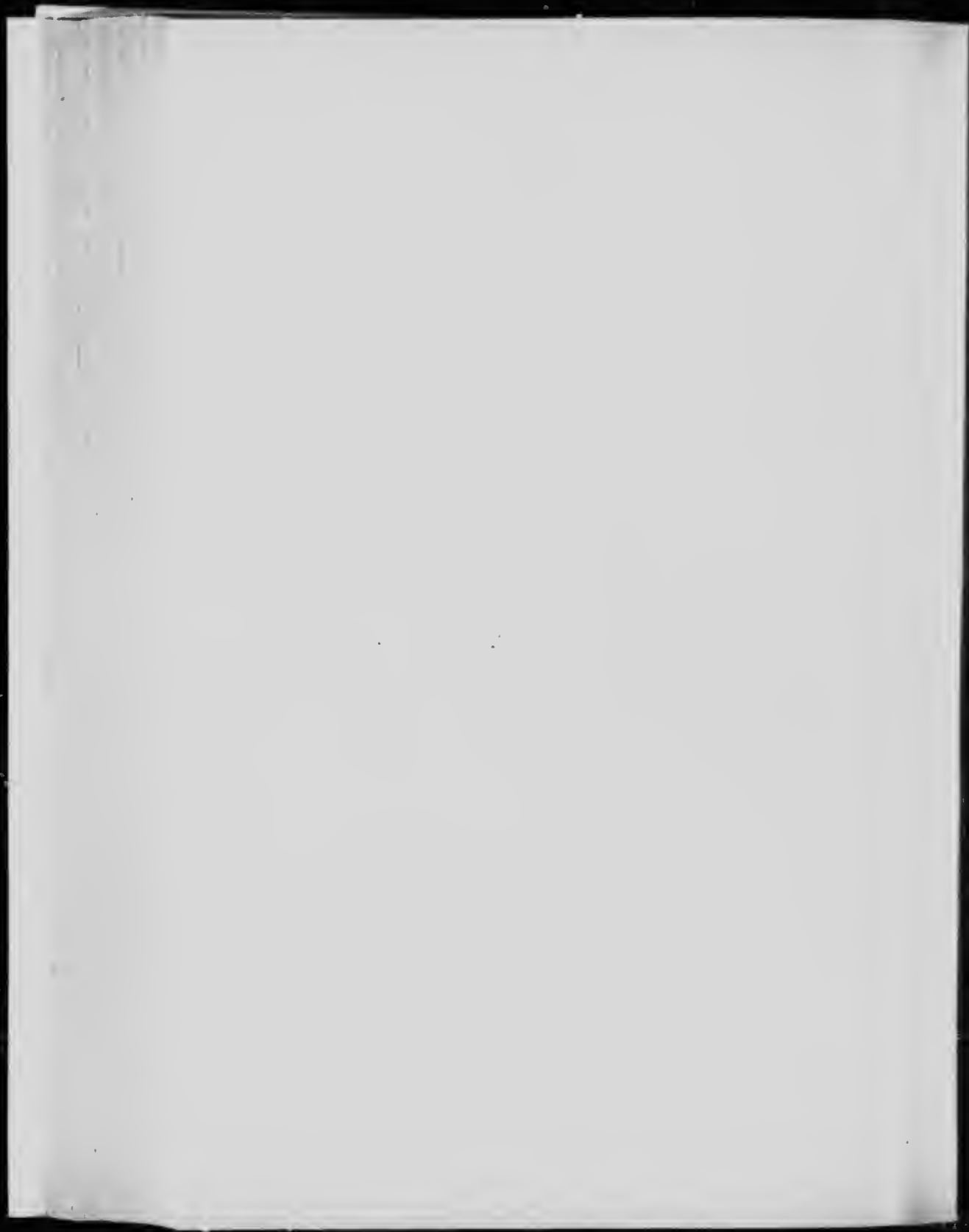
one to another, that the terrible creature was dead; and a number of the bravest of them — three walruses, and several bears and wolves — stole down to see what kind of a dinner the body would make. That is what they were always thinking about everything — how it would feel in their stomachs.

On the way down to the valley, a bear and a walrus pushed against each other and immediately began to fight. Soon the smell of blood was strong in the air, and all the animals that had started down to try to eat the dead body of the fire tried to eat one another instead. Two great bears, with their claws and their teeth deep in each other's hides, went rolling down a steep side of a hill

straight into the coals and ashes of the spruce tree. Of course the fire was not dead! There was a great bed of hot, red coals under the ashes. Little flames sprang up around the bodies of the fighting bears, and began to eat the long, thick coats of fur. The bears felt the awful stings, and quickly let go of each other and scrambled to their feet. Their backs and sides were smarting and their noses and paws were terribly blistered. They saw the red and yellow coals all about them, blinking and shining like the eyes of wicked devils—and their hearts melted with fear. Away they ran, howling and roaring, with the flames leaping high on their backs. It was a frightful sight. The animals that saw it, all



“Away they ran, howling and roaring”



W WHY OLD KING WALRUS WENT AWAY W

dashed away to their dens, fearing that the dreadful red creatures might chase them and spring upon their backs as they had sprung upon the backs of the fighting bears. Even old King Walrus went heaving and lumbering away, and hid between two hummocks of rock. As for the unfortunate bears who had rolled into the fire, they ran straight ahead, without caring or seeing or thinking where they were running to. They were blind with terror and mad with pain. They ran and ran until at last one of them fell into Beaver River and the other into Black Fox Pond. Of course the water killed the fire on their backs and sides, but for a long time they just swam around and around in the cold water. At last,

though they still smarted and ached all over, they knew that the terrible creatures had gone away from them. So they swam ashore—one to the bank of the river and one to the bank of the pond—and ran seaward as hard as they could. All they thought about was the quickest way of getting out of that terrible country.

“Now it happened that Porcupine Killer and the other men of the tribe knew nothing about the trouble of the two bears and the fright which all the other animals had received. If they had known they would have felt very happy. They had heard more howls and yells and roars than usual, but did not know what the trouble was. When Porcupine Killer awoke he

WHY OLD KING WALRUS WENT AWAY

fed the coals of his fire with sticks of dry wood, and broiled several slices of caribou meat for breakfast. He was very merry, and could not help singing when he thought of how life had changed since the morning before. No one and his wife and baby, and nearly every one in the tribe, had food to eat, and a warmth like sunlight in their caves, and a friend that struck terror to the hearts of the fierce animals. His wife awoke at the noise of his song (for he was not a very fine singer) and she, too, was happy as soon as the fog of sleep had passed from her mind and she remembered the wonderful thing that had happened. After they had eaten, Porcupine Killer said, 'I am going out to frighten the animals again—

and to-day they shall be frightened more than they were yesterday. This wonderful thing that dances and whispers so peacefully on the floor of our cave is greater than all the fangs and claws and tusks of all the animals in the world. And it is my friend—the friend of the tribe. I shall hunt old King Walrus himself, and cause him to repent of the evil he has done.’

“The woman begged him not to be rash. The giant animals had ruled the country so long, and hunted men as men hunt hares and foxes now, that she could not believe that anything was stronger than the animals. But Porcupine Killer had no fear, since he had seen the power of the fire. He looked out of the mouth of the cave, and saw

W WHY OLD KING WALRUS WENT AWAY W

the ashes of the fire lying black and gray on the rocky ground. He looked all around the sides of the valley, lying quiet in the brightness of the autumn morning, and could not see so much as a skulking fox. He crawled out and looked to the right and left, at the holes in the rocky hillside where so many of his own people lived. He saw little wisps of smoke rising here and there from among the boulders and from the mouths of some of the caves. He shouted for the hidden warriors to come out. Winter Morning, the chief, and Broken Arrow were the first to appear. Porcupine Killer called to them that he was going on a great hunt, and that they should see wonderful things happen be-

fore the sun had reached the top of the sky.

“ ‘We saw many wonders yesterday, great Magician,’ said Winter Morning. ‘What new wonders will you show us to-day?’

“ ‘I am not a magician,’ replied Porcupine Killer, who was an honest young man. ‘But the wonder you shall see to-day will be the hunting of the fierce animals that have hunted us since the beginning of time.’

“Six warriors joined Porcupine Killer in front of his cave. They looked at every hill and wood and rock, but could not see one of their enemies. ‘We are the masters of the world,’ said Porcupine Killer. He took a burning stick in his hand, from his own fire, and led

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the warriors to the other side of the little valley. They passed the long heap of dead ashes and coals, where the tree had burned the night before. The ashes were still warm, and deep in the middle of the mass a few coals were still alive. At the far side of the valley they threw together a great heap of dry bushes and moss and fallen logs. To this Porcupine Killer set a flame from the torch in his hand; and in a minute it was crackling and breathing and blazing, and lifting clouds of black smoke into the air. Then each warrior took a blazing stick from the heap, and again Porcupine Killer led them forward. They had not gone far before two wolves sprang from a grove of spruces in front of them

and went galloping away. At that, the warriors shouted and laughed, and waved their blazing sticks. It made them feel great and brave to see the very same beasts that were in the habit of hunting them turn tail and run at the sight of them. They went up to the top of the hill and there built another fire in a rocky place. And so they moved forward over hills and hummocks and barrens, and through patches of dark forest, sending all manner of animals fleeing before them. Here and there they built and lit new fires, to protect their homeward trail; but Porcupine Killer chose the places for these fires with great care. 'It does not eat rocks,' he said. So all the fires were made on rocky places, away from

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trees and bushes. Porcupine Killer had a thought in the back of his head that it would not be wise for all the forests in the country to be devoured by this wonderful new creature.

“At last the warriors came upon old King Walrus himself, lying sound asleep in a narrow valley between two small hills. He was all alone, for his followers had deserted him during the night. Porcupine Killer made a sign to his companions to be very quiet. They hid along the crest of one of the hills, above the great, round back of King Walrus. Then Porcupine Killer gathered a huge armful of dry moss and twigs, set it alight with his torch, and threw it down upon the walrus's back.

Then, standing on a high rock and waving his torch so that the smoke and sparks flew thick and fast, he shouted, 'Wake up, old blubber-sides, and return to your own country! Wake up and see the Red Spirit sitting on your back!'

"Through his heavy, troubled dreams old King Walrus heard the voice and felt a horrible sting in his fat back. He lifted his huge head and cast one glance at Porcupine Killer and the flaming stick. He felt the teeth of the terrible red creature, and knew that it had caught him in his sleep. With a bellow of terror that nearly deafened the hidden warriors, he floundered out of the valley and travelled seaward as fast as he could go."

WHY OLD KING WALRUS WENT AWAY

Squat-by-the-fire puffed hard at her pipe, and stared into the fire.

"Did he get home?" asked Flying Plover.

"Yes. He reached the sea, and dashed into the deep water, and swam straight home to his lands of ice and snow," replied the old woman.

"And what did Porcupine Killer do?" asked the little boy.

"He went home, too, and cooked a fine caribou steak for his dinner."

"Did all the animals run out of the country?"

"No. In time they lost some of their fear of the fire. But they were always afraid to go very close to it."

"When were the animals made as small as they are now?"

“That belongs to another story. If I tell you any more now, my brain will split and the skin will come off my throat again,” replied the old woman.

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VII

ANOTHER STORY OF GLUSKAP AND HIS PEOPLE

“A TIME came when the great animals in Gluskap’s own country broke the good rules he had made for them,” began old Squat-by-the-fire. “They were so big and strong, and had become so accustomed to seeing Gluskap in the form of a small young man, that they forgot how powerful he was. They were by nature fierce and bloodthirsty, though they had hidden the evil deep in their hearts for many years. The trouble was started by a great wolf. He stuck his head into a man’s lodge and

glared at the man's children until they all began to cry with fright. Then the man was angry, and struck the wolf on the snout with a club. At that, the wolf caught the man between his cruel jaws and killed him. The taste of the human blood awoke all the evil that had been sleeping for so long in his heart. Then he ran about the country, chasing men and women and every animal smaller or weaker than himself, and killing many of them. At sight of that all the other wolves and fierce animals felt a madness in their brains, and began to hunt and kill. Gluskap left his lodge at the noise and looked about him with eyes that could see for the distance of a four days' journey. At sight of the

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blood and the hunting beasts he was filled with anger. By his magic he made himself as high as a mountain. Then he caught the animals in his great hands, reaching here and there after them, across hills and valleys; and as he returned each animal to the ground it was as small as its kind is to-day. And this he did all over the world; and from that day to this the animals have no more been masters of the wilderness. Then he led the men and women and children of the tribe, who had been in his care for so many years, far away to a country of thick forest and broad rivers—a finer country, I have heard, than even this land of ours. There they built villages and prospered, and for many hundreds of

years Gluskap continued to be as a father to them."

"What did his people do, in their fine new country?" asked Flying Plover.

"They did many things," replied the old woman. "I have heard from Micmacs on the coast that in time there came to be many magicians in that country. Some of the magic was good, such as Gluskap himself knew; and some was bad—and that was practiced by his enemies. Yes, he had many enemies—evil people who hated him because he always fought against evil."

"Please tell me something about the magic," begged the little boy.

The old medicine woman thought

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for a long time, and scratched her head very hard.

“I know only one story about the magic of Gluskap’s people—and I am not sure if it is a true story or not, for I heard it from a Micmac fisherman on the coast,” she said.

“Long ago, in the country of Gluskap’s people—the new country to which he had led them from the barren lands—there lived three boys in one big lodge. They were the sons of the chief of the village. One day, while they were at play in the woods at some distance from their father’s lodge, they heard a sudden squeak and a sound of struggling in a nearby thicket. They ran swiftly to the place, and were in time to save a little brown

hare from the hunger of a wildcat. They beat the wildcat with sticks until it sprang away. They carried the wounded hare to their lodge, and there washed and dressed its hurts. In a day or two it was able to hop about the lodge. One morning, when the father and mother were fishing in the river, the hare spoke to the children with a human voice. 'My friends,' it said, 'to-day I must journey far to the northward, on Gluskap's business. For your kindness to me each of you shall receive a magic gift. I shall name the gifts, so each can make his choice, and to-night you will find them at the door of your lodge.' The boys were dumb with wonder, for they knew that the little brown hare must be a great ma-

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gician. 'First,' the hare continued, 'are the moccasins of the wind. With these on his feet a man can run above the tree-tops, on the currents of the air. Second, is the wallet of plenty. With this at his belt, a man will never lack either food or water. The third gift is an arrow of red wood, feathered with red and barbed with yellow metal.'

"The oldest boy chose the moccasins of the wind. The second in age said that the wallet of plenty seemed a fine thing to him. So the youngest got the red arrow. Then the hare hopped away into the bushes; and at night the three gifts lay by the door of the lodge. The seasons passed. The boy who possessed the moccasins of

the wind became a great hunter and warrior.

“When he was twenty years of age he was made chief of the village. His lodge was spread deep with the pelts of wolves and bears and foxes. He was a great man — and all owing to the virtue of the magic moccasins. But he did not always remember that. He was full of pride. The second brother grew sleek, and slow of wit. Cooked food and fresh water were always at his side, so he was content to sit still. But the youngest of the brothers was neither famous nor lazy. He was a brave fighter, but he led no war parties. He was a good hunter and worked hard for his living. He could find no magic in the red arrow, though he had put

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it to many tests. It shot no straighter and flew no farther than the other shafts in his quiver. But he always kept it near him, ready for whatever might happen, for his faith in its virtue was strong.

“One day in early autumn the young man with the red arrow left the village of his people. Something had spoken to him in his sleep, and had told him that a great adventure awaited him in a far country. So he journeyed northward and westward, by whatever trails came most readily to his feet. Game was plenty, so he did not want for food. On the evening of the third day of his journey he came to the edge of a great barren. It spread before him, treeless from horizon to horizon. But a little

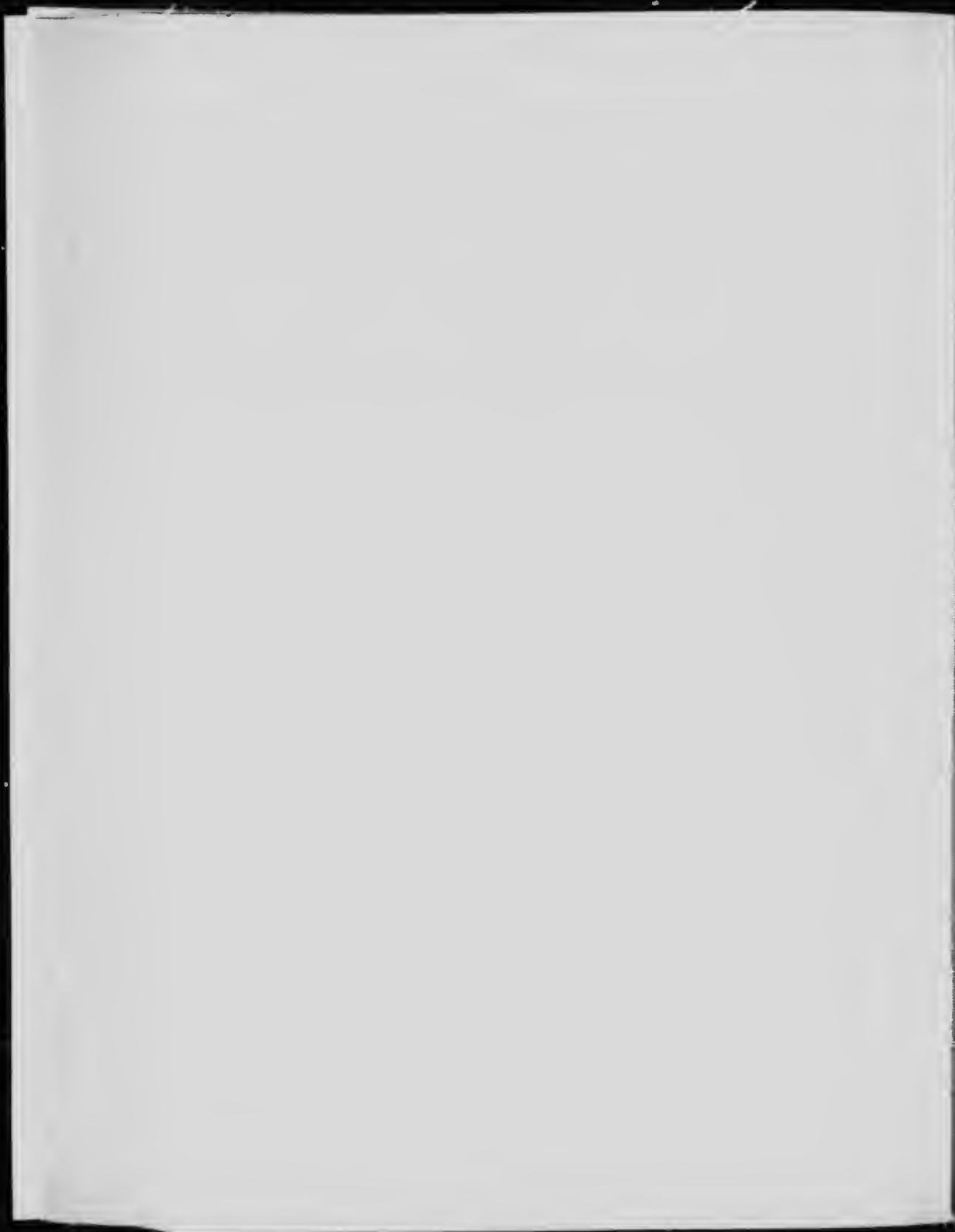
voice in his brain told him that his way led straight on.

“After he had traveled over that great barren for more than two days he saw a line of blue hills far to the north. While he was still many miles distant from them he caught sight of something running swiftly toward him. As it drew near him he saw, greatly to his wonder, that it was a young woman. Her eyes were bright with terror, and she ran unsteadily over the rough ground. When she saw the young man she swerved in her course and ran to him, crying out that a terrible wizard followed her in the form of a great bear. The youth set an arrow to the string of his bow; and, as he waited for the bear to appear, the girl told him

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“ Suddenly the great bear appeared, galloping heavily ”



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that he who hunted her was the most powerful of all the evil wizards, and that he could take upon himself at pleasure the form of any bird or animal.

“Suddenly the great bear appeared, galloping heavily but swiftly. Its small eyes burned with ferocity. Its narrow, scarlet tongue hung from its jaws. As the youth drew his bow he noticed that the red arrow was the one he had chanced to draw from his belt. He loosed it straight at the shoulder of the advancing beast. It flashed from the string and vanished. The bear advanced. The young brave trembled, and the girl cried out in dismay. But in a second the red arrow fell at its master's feet, and across its haft hung the moccasins

of the wind. In a flash the young man understood. He tore his own moccasins from his feet and replaced them with the magic pair. Then he returned the red arrow to his quiver and caught the girl in his arms. She felt no heavier than a young fox, so great was the magic of the moccasins.

“‘Have no fear,’ he said, and sprang away. Under his speeding feet the earth swam back and melted behind them, and the gray, brown, blue, and red of its tinted surface mixed like colored waters. For a thousand miles the wizard followed, now with the stride of a moose, now with the wings of an eagle; but he was left so far behind in the first half-second that he lost both scent and sight of them before

the magic moccasins had made a dozen strides. So you may believe that at the end of his thousand miles he was very far on the wrong trail. When the young man paused to take breath he found that floors and heaps of ice stretched away on all sides. The air was bitterly cold. Overhead the dome of heaven was alive with the magnificent, drifting radiance of the Northern Lights. The girl lay weakly against his arm, for the speed of their flight had held her breath in her nostrils. Presently she opened her eyes and looked about her fearfully.

“‘How came we to this place?’ she asked.

“‘By the magic of the moccasins of the wind,’ he told her,

pointing down at the gaily beaded shoes on his feet.

“She trembled and hid her face. ‘It was like death,’ she said.

“Then the youth understood that to endure the tremendous flight of the moccasins one must also be possessed of their strength. For hours they wandered about in search of shelter and food. In unhurried motion the young man’s feet experienced none of the magic. He was thankful for that. At last the girl sank on the ice, faint for want of food and drink. Then the man be-thought him of the red arrow, and, fitting it to his bow, fired it at a distance.

“‘Its virtue is so great,’ he thought, ‘that it may bring a fowl or a fish to me, to keep this woman

from death.' In a second the arrow was at his feet, and midway on the red shaft hung the wallet of plenty. Thankfully they ate and drank, and hearts and bodies recovered strength.

"Many moons later the possessor of the red arrow, accompanied by the beautiful young woman, approached the lodges of his own people. At his belt, securely wrapped in water-tight skins, he carried the moccasins of the wind and the wallet of plenty. He was an honest man, and wished to return them to the rightful owners uninjured. A mile from the village they met the second brother—the man who had chosen the wallet of plenty from among the three gifts. Upon his shoulders he car-

ried a great stick of maple-wood. In appearance he had changed surprisingly since the other's departure. The muscles stood out on his lean arms and legs, and his eyes were merry; whereas of old his limbs had been heavy with fat and his eyes dull.

“‘Why do you carry that great log?’ asked the wanderer, after they had exchanged brotherly greetings.

“‘To split and store away, for the making of paddles and arrow-shafts in the stormy days of winter,’ replied the other.

“The wanderer handed him the wallet of plenty—but, upon opening it, they found that it was empty.

“‘Tis better so,’ remarked the

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maker of paddles, as he hoisted the stick of maple back to his shoulders.

“At the outskirts of the village, in a modest wigwam, the young couple found the eldest of the three brothers, the man who had chosen the moccasins of the wind. He was lying on a couch of skins, and his children played about the door. His greeting was modest and kindly. But he could not rise from his couch to welcome them.

“‘In my pride,’ he said, ‘I forgot that my prowess in the chase and the battle was all of the magic moccasins. I thought myself the very equal of Gluskap. But the moccasins flew away from me, and in the next hunt I was stricken to the earth by a wounded moose— for

I was no stronger than the youngest warrior and no swifter than the oldest chief.'

"The new-comer produced the moccasins of the wind from the bag at his side, and gave them into the hands of the fallen chieftain. At that moment a tall stranger entered the wigwam and took the moccasins from his hands. Then, turning to the other, he took the red arrow from the quiver. Already the wallet of plenty hung at his belt of blue wampum.

"The three gifts were equal in the sight of Gluskap,' he said, 'but you see how you have driven their magic to the desires of your own hearts. Only the red arrow worked to its full power, and in doing so it has doubled its magic. Now Glus-

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kap has need of it, and takes it back as a gift from this young man.' He turned, and glided from the lodge."

"Who was it?" asked Flying Plover.

"I don't know; but perhaps it was Gluskap himself," replied the old woman.

"Do you know any more stories about the red arrow?" asked the boy.

"Perhaps I do," said the old woman. "But I'll not tell you any more to-night."

THE END



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