

# The Three Wishes



## A Canadian Fairy Tale.



**T**ELL me an Indian fairy tale." commanded the small white boy, as his habit was, sitting down beside Chief Ossawippi on the bank of the great Canadian river.

"What do you call a fairy tale?" said Ossawippi, without looking up from the snow-shoe he was making.

"Oh, any sort of story that couldn't really happen; at least, anything that couldn't happen *now*, you know."

"Well, if you stop fidgeting and sit still, I'll

tell you a story about Goose-cap."

"All right! Who was Goose-cap?"

"Oh, he was a wise one. He was the wisest of all. He looked so wise that people got frightened of him. That was why he put on a head-dress of wild goose feathers and called himself Goose-cap. Before he

came and showed them how, the Indians didn't know how to plant corn or make shell beads or snow-shoes or toboggans, or anything; and even after that they didn't behave like good men, so he went away again. But he said that anyone might come and see him before he went away and get a wish—just one wish, and no more. He said he would give them anything they liked best."

"That was fine. Did everybody go to see him?"

"No; it was too far. He lived on an island where the river becomes a lake, hundreds and hundreds of miles away. Plenty of people started, but only a few got there."

"All right. Tell me about some of the people that went and got wished."

Then Ossawippi told this story:—

Once upon a time there were three brothers who set out on a visit to Goose-cap. They were seven years on the journey, climbing mountains that seemed to have no top, and scrambling through forests full of thorn-bushes, and wading through swamps where the mosquitoes tried to eat them up,

and sailing down rivers where the rapids broke up their rafts and nearly drowned them. At the end of seven years they heard Goose-cap's dogs barking, so then they knew they were on the right road: and they went on for three months more, and the barking was a little louder every day, till at last they came to the edge of the great lake. Then Goose-cap saw them, and sailed over in his great stone canoe and took them to his island.

You never saw such a beautiful island as that was, it was so green and warm and bright; and Goose-cap feasted his visitors for three days and nights with meats and fruits that they had never tasted before. Then he said, "Tell me what you want, and why you have taken so much trouble to find me."

The youngest brother said, "I want to be always funny, so that no one can listen to me without laughing."

Then the great wise one stuck his finger in the ground, and pulled up a root of the laughing plant, and said, "When you have eaten this you will be the funniest man in the tribe, and people will laugh as soon as you open your lips. But see that you don't eat it till you get home."

The youngest brother thanked him, and hurried away, and going home was so easy that it took only seven days instead of seven years. All the same, the young man was in such a hurry to try his wish that on the sixth morning he ate up the root. All of a sudden he felt so light-headed that he began to dance and shout with fun; and the ducks that he was going to shoot for breakfast flew away laughing into the reeds over the river, and the deer ran away laughing into the woods, and he got nothing to eat all day.

Next morning he came to the village where he lived, and he wanted to tell his friends how hungry he was; but at the first word he spoke they all burst out laughing, and as he went on they laughed louder and louder—it seemed so funny, though they couldn't hear a word he said because they made such a noise themselves. Then they got to laughing so hard that they rolled over and over on the ground, and squeezed their sides, and cried with laughing, till they had to run away into their houses and shut their doors, or they'd have been killed with laughing. He called to them to come out and give him something to eat, but as soon as they heard him they began to laugh again;

and at last they shouted out to him that if he didn't go away they would kill him. So he went away into the woods and lived by himself; and whenever he wanted to hunt he had to tie a strap over his mouth, or the mock-bird would hear him and begin to laugh, and all the other birds and beasts would hear the mock-bird and laugh and run away.

The second brother said to Goose-cap, "I want to be the greatest of hunters without the trouble of hunting. Why should I go after the animals if I could make them come to me?"

Goose-cap knew why. Still, he gave the man a little flute, saying, "Be sure you don't use it till you get home."

Then the hunter set off; but on the sixth day he was getting so near home that he said to himself, "I am sure Goose-cap couldn't hear me now if I blew the flute *very* gently, just to try it." So he pulled out the flute and breathed into it, as gently as ever he could; but as soon as his lips touched it the flute whistled so long and loud that all the animals in the country heard it, and came rushing from north and south and east and west to see what the matter was. The deer got there first, and when they saw it was a man with bow and arrows they tried to run away again; but they couldn't, for the bears were close behind, all round, and pushed and pushed till the deer were all jammed up together and the man was squeezed to death in the middle of them.

The eldest brother, when the other two had set off for home, said to Goose-cap, "Give me great wisdom, so that I can marry the Mohawk chief's daughter without killing her father or getting killed myself."

You see, the eldest brother was an Algonquin, and the Mohawks always hated the Algonquins.

Goose-cap stooped down on the shore and picked up a hard clam-shell, and he ground it and ground it all that day and all the next night, till he had made a beautiful wampum bead of it. "Hang this round your neck by a thread of flax," he said, "and go and do whatever the chief asks you."

The eldest brother thanked him, and left the beautiful island, and travelled seven days and seven nights till he came to the Mohawk town. He went straight to the

chief and said to him, "I want to marry your daughter."

"Very well," said the chief; "you can marry my daughter if you bring me the head of the great dragon that lives in the pit outside the gate."

The eldest brother promised he would, and went out and cut down a tree and laid it across the mouth of the pit. Then he danced round the pit, and as he danced he sang a beautiful Algonquin song, something like this, "Come and eat me, old dragon, for I am fat and my flesh is sweet, and there is plenty of marrow in my bones!" The dragon was asleep, but the song gave him beautiful dreams, and he uncoiled himself and smacked his lips and stretched his head up into the air and laid his neck on the log. Then the eldest brother cut off the head, snick-snack, and carried it to the chief.

"That's right," said the chief; but he was angry in his heart, and next morning, when he should have given away his daughter, he said to the Algonquin, "I will let you marry her if I see that you can dive as well as the wild duck in the lake."

When they got to the lake the wild duck dived and stayed under water for three minutes, but then it had to come up to breathe. Then the eldest brother dived, and turned into a fish, and stayed under water so long that they were sure he was drowned; but just as they were going home, singing for joy to be rid of him, he came running after them, and said, "Now I have had my bath, and we can go and get married."

"Wait till the evening," said the chief, "and then you can get married."

When the evening came, the Northern Lights were dancing and leaping in the sky, so the chief said, "The Northern Lights would be angry if you got married without running them a race. Run your best, and win, and then you won't have to wait any longer."

The Northern Lights darted away at once to the west, and the eldest brother ran after them, and the chief said to his daughter, "They will lead him right down to the other side of the world, and he will be an old man before he can get back, so he won't trouble us any more." But just as the chief finished speaking, the Algonquin came running up from the east. He had turned himself

into lightning and gone right round the world, and the night was nearly gone before the Northern Lights came up after him, panting and puffing.

"Yes, my son," said the chief; "you have won the race, so now we can go on with the wedding. The place where we have our weddings is down by the river at the bottom of the valley, and we will go there on our toboggans."

Now the hillside was rough with rocks and fallen trees, and the river flowed between steep precipices, so nobody could toboggan down there without being broken to pieces. But the eldest brother said he was ready, and asked the chief to come on the same toboggan.

"No," said the chief, "but as soon as you have started I will."

Then the young man gave his toboggan a push and jumped on, and didn't even take the trouble to sit down. The chief waited to see him dashed to pieces; but the toboggan skimmed down the mountain side without touching a rock or a tree, and flew across the ravine at the bottom and up the hillside opposite, and the Algonquin was standing straight up the whole time. When he got to the top of the mountain opposite he turned his toboggan round and coasted back as he had come. And when the chief saw him coming near and standing up on his toboggan, he lost his temper and let fly an arrow straight at the young man's heart; but the arrow stuck in Goose-cap's beard, and the Algonquin left it sticking there and took no notice. Only when he got to the top he said to the chief, "Now it's your turn," and put him on the toboggan and sent him spinning down into the valley. And whether the chief ever came up again I don't know; but, at any rate, his daughter married the wise young man without any more fuss, and went home with him and became my great-great-many-great-grand-mother.

"That's fine," said the small white boy; "but where did Goose-cap go to?"

"Oh, who knows? Some say he went to England, and that's how they learned to make books and steamboats and things like that; but they can't make snow-shoes and lacrosse sticks as well as the poor Indians—can they, little pink-face?"

HOWARD ANGUS KENNEDY.

