

THE BOOK OF
NATURE MYTHS



FLORENCE HOLBROOK

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BY

FLORENCE HOLBROOK

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The Book of Nature Myths By Florence Holbrook.

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THE STORY OF THE FIRST WHITEFISH

ONE day a crane was sitting on a rock far out in the water, when he heard a voice say, "Grandfather Crane, Grandfather Crane, please come and carry us across the lake." It was the voice of a child, and when the crane had come to the shore, he saw two little boys holding each other's hands and crying bitterly.

"Why do you cry?" asked the crane, "and why do you wish to go across the lake, away from your home and friends?"

"We have no friends," said the little boys, crying more bitterly than ever. "We have no father and no mother, and a cruel witch troubles us. She tries all the time to do us harm, and we are going to run away where she can never find us."

"I will carry you over the lake," said the crane. "Hold on well, but do not touch the back of my head, for if you do, you will fall into the water and go to the bottom of the lake. Will you obey me?"

"Yes, indeed, we will obey," they said.

"We will not touch your head. But please come quickly and go as fast as you can. We surely heard the voice of the witch in the woods."

It really was the witch, and she was saying over and over to herself, "I will catch them, and I will punish them so that they will never run away from me again. They will obey me after I have caught them."

The crane bore the two little boys gently to the other shore, and when he came back, there stood the witch.

"Dear, gentle crane," she said, "you are so good to every one. Will you carry me over the lake? My two dear children are lost in the woods, and I have cried bitterly for them all day long."

The spirit of the lake had told the crane to carry across the lake every one that asked to be taken over; so he said, "Yes, I will carry you across. Hold on well, but do not touch the back of my head, for if you do, you will fall into the water and go to the bottom of the lake. Will you obey me?"

"Yes, indeed, I will," said the witch; but she thought, "He would not be so timid about letting me touch the back of his head if he were not afraid of my magic. I will put my hand on his head, and then he will always be in my power." So when they were far out over the lake, she

put her hand on the crane's head, and before she could say "Oh!" she was at the bottom of the lake.

"You shall never live in the light again," said the crane, "for you have done no good on earth. You shall be a whitefish, and you shall be food for the Indians as long as they eat fish."

WAS IT THE FIRST TURTLE?

ONCE upon a time there was a great fight between two tribes of Indians. It was so fierce that the river ran red with blood, and the war-cries were so loud and angry that the animals of the forest ran away in terror. The warriors fought all day long, and when it began to grow dark, all the men on one side had been killed but two warriors, one of whom was known as Turtle. In those days there were no such animals as turtles in the ponds and rivers, and no one knew why he was called by that name. At last Turtle's friend was struck by an arrow and fell to the ground.

"Now yield!" cried the enemies.

"Friend," said Turtle, "are you dead?"

"No," said his friend.

"Then I will fight on," said Turtle, and he called out, "Give life again to the warriors whom you have killed with your wicked arrows, and then I will yield, but never before. Come on, cowards that you are! You are afraid of me. You do not dare to come!"

Then his enemies said, "We will all shoot our arrows at once, and some one of them will be sure to kill him." They made ready to fire, but Turtle, too, made ready. He had two thick shields, and he put one over his back and one over his breast. Then he called to his fierce enemies, "Are you not ready? Come on, fierce warriors! Shoot your arrows through my breast if you can."

The warriors all shot, but not an arrow struck Turtle, for the two shields covered his breast and his back, and whenever an arrow buzzed through the air, he drew in his head and his arms between the shields, and so he was not harmed. "Why do you not aim at me?" he cried. "Are you shooting at the mountain, or at the sun and the moon? Good fighters you are, indeed! Try again."

His enemies shot once more, and this time an arrow killed the wounded friend as he lay on the ground. When Turtle cried, "Friend, are you living?" there was no answer.

"My friend is dead," said Turtle. "I will fight no more."

"He has yielded," cried his enemies.

"He has not," said Turtle, and with one great leap he sprang into the river. His enemies did not dare to spring after him.

"Those long arms of his would pull us to the bottom," they said; "but we will watch till he comes up, and then we shall be sure of him."

They were not so sure as they thought, for he did not come up, and all that they could see in the water was a strange creature unlike anything that had been there before.

"It has arms and a head," said one.

"And it pulls them out of sight just as Turtle did," said another.

"It has a shield over its back and one over its breast, as Turtle had," said the first. Then all the warriors were so eager to watch the strange animal that they no longer remembered the fight. They crowded up to the shore of the river.

"It is not Turtle," cried one.

"It is Turtle," declared another.

"It is so like him that I do not care to go into the water as long as it is in sight," said still another.

"But if this is not Turtle, where is he?" they all asked, and not one of the wise men of their tribe could answer.

WHY THE CROCODILE HAS A WIDE MOUTH

"COME to my kingdom whenever you will," said the goddess of the water to the king of the land. "My waves will be calm, and my animals will be gentle. They will be as good to your children as if they were my own. Nothing in all my kingdom will do you harm."

The goddess went back to her home in the sea, and the king walked to the shore of the river and stood gazing upon the beautiful water. Beside him walked his youngest son.

"Father," asked the boy, "would the goddess be angry if I went into the water to swim?"

"No," answered the father. "She says that nothing in all her wide kingdom will do us harm. The water-animals will be kind, and the waves will be calm."

The boy went into the water. He could swim as easily as a fish, and he went from shore to shore, sometimes talking with the fishes, sometimes getting a bright piece of stone to carry to his father. Suddenly something caught him by the foot and dragged him down, down, through the deep, dark water. "Oh, father!" he cried, but his father had gone away from the shore, and the strange creature, whatever it was, dragged the boy down to the very bottom of the river.

The river was full of sorrow for what the creature had done, and it lifted the boy gently and bore him to the feet of the goddess. His eyes were closed and his face was white, for he was dead. Great tears came from the eyes of the goddess when she looked at him. "I did not think any of my animals would do such a cruel thing," she said. "His father shall never know it, for the boy shall not remember what has happened."

Then she laid her warm hand upon his head, and whispered some words of magic into his ear. "Open your eyes," she called, and soon they were wide open. "You went in to swim," said the goddess. "Did the water please you?"

"Yes, surely."

"Were the water-animals kind to you?"

"Yes, surely," answered the boy, for the magic words had kept him from remembering anything about the strange creature that had dragged him to the bottom of the river.

The boy went home to his father, and as soon as he was out of sight, the goddess called to the water-animals, "Come one, come all, come little, come great."

"It is the voice of the goddess," said the water-animals, and they all began to swim toward her as fast as they could.

When they were together before her, she said, "One of you has been cruel and wicked. One of you has dragged to the bottom of the river the son of my friend, the king of the land, but I have carried him safely to shore, and now he is in his home. When he comes again, will you watch over him wherever in the wide, wide water he may wish to go?"

"Yes!" "Yes!" "Yes!" cried the water-animals.

"Water," asked the goddess, "will you be calm and still when the son of my friend is my guest?"

"Gladly," answered the water.

Suddenly the goddess caught sight of the crocodile hiding behind the other animals. "Will you be kind to the boy and keep harm away from him?" she asked.

Now it was the crocodile that had dragged the boy to the bottom of the river. He wished to say, "Yes," but he did not dare to open his mouth for fear of saying, "I did it, I did it," so he said not a word. The goddess cried, "Did you drag the king's son to the bottom of the river?" Still the crocodile dared not open his mouth for fear of saying, "I did it, I did it." Then the goddess was angry. She drew her long sword, and saying, "The mouth that will not open when it should must be made to open," she struck the crocodile's mouth with the sword. "Oh, look!" cried the other animals. The crocodile's mouth had opened; there was no question about that, for it had split open so far that he was afraid he should never be able to keep it closed.

THE STORY OF THE PICTURE ON THE VASE

ON some of the beautiful vases that are made in Japan there is a picture of a goddess changing a dragon into an island. When the children of Japan say, "Mother, tell us a story about the picture," this is what the mother says:--

"Long, long ago there was a goddess of the sea who loved the people of Japan. She often came out of the water at sunset, and while all the bright colors were in the sky, she would sit on a high rock that overlooked the water and tell stories to the children. Such wonderful stories as they were! She used to tell them all about the strange fishes that swim in and out among the rocks and the mosses, and about the fair maidens that live deep down in the sea far under the waves. The children would ask, 'Are there no children in the sea? Why do they never come out to play with us?' The goddess would answer, 'Some time they will come, if you only keep on wishing for them. What children really wish for they will surely have some day.'

"Then the goddess would sing to the children, and her voice was so sweet that the evening star would stand still in the sky to listen to her song. 'Please show us how the water rises and falls,' the children would beg, and she would hold up a magic stone that she had and say, 'Water, rise!' Then the waves would come in faster and faster all about the rock. When she laid down the stone and said, 'Water, fill!' the waves would be still, and the water would roll back quickly to the deep sea. She was goddess of the storm as well as of the sea, and sometimes the children would say, 'Dear goddess, please make us a storm.' She never said no to what they asked, and so the rain would fall, the lightning flare, and the thunder roll. The rain would fall all about them, but the goddess did not let it come near them. They were never afraid of the lightning, for it was far above their heads, and they knew that the goddess would not let it come down.

"Those were happy times, but there is something more to tell that is not pleasant. One of the goddess's sea-animals was a dragon, that often used to play in the water near the shore. The children never thought of being afraid of any of the sea-animals, but one day the cruel dragon seized a little child in his mouth, and in a moment he had eaten it. There was sadness over the land of Japan. There were tears and sorrowful wailing. 'O goddess', the people cried, 'come to us! Punish the wicked dragon!'

"The goddess was angry that one of her creatures should have dared to harm the little child, and she called aloud, 'Dragon, come to me.' The dragon came in a moment, for he did not dare to stay away. Then said the goddess, 'You shall never again play merrily in the water with the happy sea-animals. You shall be a rocky island. There shall be trees and plants on you, and before many years have gone, people will no longer remember that you were once an animal.'

"The dragon found that he could no longer move about as he had done, for he was changing into rock. Trees and plants grew on his back. He was an island, and when people looked at it, they said, 'That island was once a wicked dragon.' The children of the sea and the children of the land often went to the island, and there they had very happy times together."

This is the story that the mothers tell to their children when they look at the vases and see the picture of the goddess changing a dragon into an island. But when the children say, "Mother, where is the island? Cannot we go to it and play with the sea children?" the mother answers, "Oh, this was all a long, long time ago, and no one can tell now where the island was."

WHY THE WATER IN RIVERS IS NEVER STILL

ALL kinds of strange things came to pass in the days of long ago, but perhaps the strangest of all was that the nurses who cared for little children were not women, but brooks and rivers. The children and the brooks ran about together, and the brooks and rivers never said, "It is time to go to bed," for they liked to play as well as the children, and perhaps a little better. Sometimes the brooks ran first and the children followed. Sometimes the children ran first and the brooks followed. Of course, if any animal came near that would hurt the children, the brook or river in whose care they were left flowed quickly around them, so that they stood on an island and were safe from all harm.

Two little boys lived in those days who were sons of the king. When the children were old enough to run about, the king called the rivers and brooks to come before him. They came gladly, for they felt sure that something pleasant would happen, and they waited so patiently that no one would have thought they were so full of frolic.

"I have called you," said the king, "to give you the care of my two little sons. They like so well to run about that one nurse will not be enough to care for them, and of course it will be pleasanter for them to have many playmates. So I felt that it would be better to ask every river and every brook to see that they are not hurt or lost."

"We shall have the king's sons for our playmates!" whispered the rivers. "Nothing so pleasant ever happened to us before."

But the king went on, "If you keep my boys safely and well, and follow them so closely that they are not lost, then I will give you whatever gift you wish; but if I find that you have forgotten them one moment and they are lost or hurt, then you will be punished as no river was ever punished before."

The rivers and even the most frolicsome little brooks were again quiet for a moment. Then they all cried together, "O king, we will be good. There were never better nurses than we will be to your sons."

At first all went well, and the playmates had the merriest times that could be thought of. Then came a day when the sunshine was very warm, but the boys ran faster and farther than boys had ever run in the world before, and even the brooks could not keep up with them. The rivers had never been weary before, but when this warm day came, one river after another had some reason for being quiet. One complained, "I have followed the boys farther than any river." "Perhaps you have," said another, "But I have been up and down and round and round till I have forgotten how it seems to be quiet." Another declared, "I have run about long enough, and I shall run no more." A little brook said, "If I were a great

river, perhaps I could run farther," and a great river replied, "If I were a little brook, of course I could run farther."

So they talked, and the day passed. Night came before they knew it, and they could not find the boys.

"Where are my sons?" cried the king.

"Indeed, we do not know," answered the brooks and rivers in great fear, and each one looked at the others.

"You have lost my children," said the king, "and if you do not find them, you shall be punished. Go and search for them."

"Please help us," the rivers begged of the trees and plants, and everything that had life began to search for the lost boys. "Perhaps they are underground," thought the trees, and they sent their roots down into the earth. "Perhaps they are in the east," cried one animal, and he went to the east. "They may be on the mountain," said one plant, and so it climbed to the very top of the mountain. "They may be in the village," said another, and so that one crept up close to the homes of men.

Many years passed. The king was almost broken-hearted, but he knew it was of no use to search longer, so he called very sadly, "Search no longer. Let each plant and animal make its home where it is. The little plant that has crept up the mountain shall live on the mountain top, and the roots of the trees shall stay under ground. The rivers"-- Then the king stopped, and the rivers trembled. They knew that they would be punished, but what would the punishment be? The king looked at them, "As for you, rivers and brooks," he declared, "it was your work to watch my boys. The plants and trees shall find rest and live happily in their homes, but you shall ever search for my lost boys, and you shall never have a home."

So from that day to this the rivers have gone on looking for the lost children. They never stop, and some of them are so troubled that they flow first one way and then the other.

HOW THE RAVEN HELPED MEN

THE raven and the eagle were cousins, and they were almost always friendly, but whenever they talked together about men, they quarreled.

"Men are lazy," declared the eagle. "There is no use in trying to help them. The more one does for them, the less they do for themselves."

"You fly so high," said the raven, "that you cannot see how hard men work. I think that we birds, who know so much more than they, ought to help them."

"They do not work," cried the eagle. "What have they to do, I should like to know? They walk about on the ground, and their food grows close by their nests. If they had to fly through the air as we do, and get their food wherever they could, they might talk about working hard."

"That is just why we ought to help them," replied the raven. "They cannot mount up into the air as we do. They cannot see anything very well unless it is near them, and if they had to run and catch their food, they would surely die of hunger. They are poor, weak creatures, and there is not a humming-bird that does not know many things that they never heard of."

"You are a poor, weak bird, if you think you can teach men. When they feel hunger, they will eat, and they do not know how to do anything else. Just look at them! They ought to be going to sleep, and they do not know enough to do even that."

"How can they know that it is night, when they have no sun and no moon to tell them when it is day and when it is night?"

"They would not go to sleep even if they had two moons," said the eagle; "and you are no true cousin of mine if you do not let them alone."

So the two birds quarreled. Almost every time they met, they quarreled about men, and at last, whenever the eagle began to mount into the air, the raven went near the earth.

Now the eagle had a pretty daughter, she and the raven were good friends, and they never quarreled about men. One day the pretty daughter said, "Cousin Raven, are you too weak to fly as high as you used to do?"

"I never was less weak," declared the raven.

"Almost every day you keep on the ground. Can you not mount into the air?"

"Of course I can," answered the raven.

"There are some strange things in my father's lodge," said the pretty daughter, "and I do not know what they are. They are not good to eat, and I do not see what else they are good for. Will you come and see them?"

"I will go wherever you ask me," declared the raven.

The eagle's lodge was far up on the top of a high mountain, but the two birds were soon there, and the pretty daughter showed the raven the strange things. He knew what they were, and he said to himself, "Men shall have them, and by and by they will be no less wise than the birds." Then he asked, "Has your father a magic cloak?"

"Yes," answered the pretty daughter.

"May I put it on?"

"Yes, surely."

When the raven had once put on the magic cloak, he seized the strange things and put them under it. Then he called, "I will come again soon, my pretty little cousin, and tell you all about the people on the earth."

The things under his cloak were strange indeed, for one was the sun, and one was the moon. There were hundreds of bright stars, and there were brooks and rivers and waterfalls. Best of all, there was the precious gift of fire. The raven put the sun high up in the heavens, and fastened the moon and stars in their places. He let the brooks run down the sides of the mountains, and he hid the fire away in the rocks.

After a while men found all these precious gifts. They knew when it was night and when it was day, and they learned how to use fire. They cannot mount into the air like the eagle, but in some things they are almost as wise as the birds.

THE STORY OF THE EARTH AND THE SKY

THE sky used to be very close to the earth, and of course the earth had no sunshine. Trees did not grow, flowers did not blossom, and water was not clear and bright. The earth did not know that there was any other way of living, and so she did not complain.

By and by the sky and the earth had a son who was called the Shining One. When he was small, he had a dream, and he told it to the earth. "Mother Earth," he said, "I had a dream, and it was that the sky was far up above us. There was a bright light, and it made you more radiant than I ever saw you. What could the light have been?"

"I do not know, my Shining One," she answered, "for there is nothing but the earth and the sky."

After a long, long time, the Shining One was fully grown. Then he said to the sky, "Father Sky, will you not go higher up, that there may be light and warmth on the earth?"

"There is no 'higher up,'" declared the sky. "There is only just here."

Then the Shining One raised the sky till he rested on the mountain peaks.

"Oh! oh!" cried the sky. "They hurt. The peaks are sharp and rough. You are an unkind, cruel son."

"In my dreams you were still higher up," replied the Shining One, and he raised the sky still higher.

"Oh! oh!" complained the sky, "I can hardly see the peaks. I will stay on the rough rocks."

"You were far above the rocks in my dream," replied the Shining One.

Then when the sky was raised far above the earth and no longer touched even the peaks, a great change came over the earth. She, too, had thought the Shining One unkind, and she had said, "Shining One, it was only a dream. Why should you change the sky and the earth? Why not let them stay as they were before you had the dream?"

"O Mother Earth," he said, "I wish you could see the radiant change that has come to pass. The air is full of light and warmth and fragrance. You yourself are more beautiful than you were even in my dream. Listen and hear the song of the birds. See the flowers blossoming in every field, and even covering the rough peaks of the mountains. Should you be glad if I had let all things stay as they were? Was I unkind to make you so much more lovely than you were?"

Before the earth could answer, the sky began to complain. "You have spread over earth a new cloak of green, and of course she is beautiful with all her flowers and birds, but here am I, raised far above the mountain peaks. I have no cloak, nor have I flowers and birds. Shining One, give me a cloak."

"That will I do, and most gladly," replied the Shining One, and he spread a soft cloak of dark blue over the sky, and in it many a star sparkled and twinkled.

"That is very well in the night," said the heavens, "but it is not good in the daytime, it is too gloomy. Give me another cloak for the day." Then the Shining One spread a light blue cloak over the sky for the daytime, and at last the sky was as beautiful as the earth.

Now both sky and earth were contented.

"I did not know that the earth was so radiant," said the sky. "I did not know that the sky was so beautiful," said the earth. "I will send a message to tell her how lovely she is," thought the sky, and he dropped down a gentle little rain.

"I, too, will send a message," thought the earth, "and the clouds shall carry it for me." That is why there is often a light cloud rising from the earth in the morning, it is carrying a good-morning message from the beautiful earth to the sky.

HOW SUMMER CAME TO THE EARTH

PART I.

THERE was once a boy on the earth who was old enough to have a bow and arrows, but who had never seen a summer. He had no idea how it would look to have leaves on the trees, for he had never seen any such things. As for the songs of birds, he may have heard them in his dreams, but he never heard them when he was not asleep. If any one had asked, "Do you not like to walk on the soft grass?" he would have answered, "What is grass? I never saw any."

The reason why this boy had never heard of summer was because there had never been a summer on the earth. Far to the north the earth was covered with thick ice, and even farther south, where the boy lived, the ground was rarely free from ice and snow.

The boy's father was called the fisher. He taught his little son to hunt, and made him a bow like his own, only smaller. The boy was proud of his arrows, and was always happy when he went out to hunt. He had often shot a lynx, and once or twice he had shot a wolverine. Sometimes it chanced that he found nothing to shoot, and then he was not happy, for he realized how cold it was. His fingers ached, and his feet ached, and the end of his nose ached. "Oh, if I could only carry the wigwam fire about with me!" he cried, for he had no idea of any other warmth than that which came from the fire.

Now it chanced that Adjidaumo, the squirrel, was on a tree over the boy's head, and he heard this cry. He dropped a piece of ice upon the end of the boy's little red nose, and the boy bent his bow. Then he realized who it was, and he cried, "O Adjidaumo, you are warm. You have no fingers to ache with the cold. I am warm just twice a day, once in the morning and once at night."

"Boys do not know much," replied Adjidaumo, dancing lightly on the topmost bough. "The end of my nose is warm, and I have no fingers like yours to be cold, but if I had chanced to have any, I have an idea that would have kept them warm."

"What is an idea?" asked the boy.

"An idea is something that is better than a fire," replied the squirrel, "for you can carry an idea about with you, and you have to leave the fire at home. A lynx has an idea sometimes, and a wolverine has one sometimes, but a squirrel has one twice as often as a boy."

The poor boy was too cold to be angry, and he begged, "Adjidaumo, if there is any way for me to keep warm, will you not tell me what it is? A lynx would be more kind to me than you are, and I am sure a wolverine would tell me."

Adjidaumo had rarely been cold, but when he realized how cold the boy was, he was sorry for him, and he said, "All you have to do is to go home and cry. When your father says, 'Why do you cry?' answer nothing but 'Boo-hoo, boo-hoo, boo-hoo! Get me summer, get me summer!'"

Now this boy rarely cried, but his hands and feet were so very cold that he thought he would do as the squirrel had told him, and he started for home. As soon as he reached the wigwam, he threw himself down upon the ground and cried. He cried so hard that his tears made a river that ran out of the wigwam door. It was a frozen river, of course, but when the fisher saw it, he knew it was made of the tears of his little son. "What are you crying for?" he asked, but all the boy answered was "Boo-hoo, boo-hoo! Get me summer, father, get me summer!"

"Summer," repeated the fisher thoughtfully. "It is not easy to get summer, but I will find it if I can."

PART II.

The fisher made a great feast for the animals that he thought could help him to find summer. The otter, the lynx, the badger, and the wolverine came. After they had eaten, the hunter told them what he wished to do, and they all set out to find summer.

For many days they traveled, and at last they came to a high mountain upon whose summit the sky seemed to rest.

"That is where summer is," declared the badger. "All we have to do is to climb to the summit and take it from the heavens." So they all climbed and climbed, till it seemed as if they would never reach the top. After a long time they were on the very highest summit, but the heavens were above them.

"We cannot reach it," said the fisher.

"Let us try," said the lynx.

"I will try first," said the otter. So the otter sprang up with all his might, but he could not touch the heavens. He rolled down the side of the mountain, and then he ran home. The badger tried, and the beaver tried, and the lynx tried, but not one of them could leap far enough to reach the heavens. "Now I will try," said the wolverine. "I am not going to climb away up here for nothing." The fisher watched most eagerly, for he thought, "There's my boy at home crying, and what shall I do if I cannot get the summer for him?"

The wolverine leaped farther than any wolverine ever leaped before, and he went where no animal on the earth had ever been before, for he went straight through the floor of the heavens. Of course the fisher followed, and there they were in a more lovely place than any

one on the earth had ever dreamed of, for they were in the land of summer, and summer had never come to the earth.

The soft, warm air went down through the hole in the floor and spread over the earth. Birds flew down, singing happily as they flew, and all kinds of flowers that are on the earth to-day made their way through the hole as fast as they could, for they knew all about the little boy in the wigwam who was wishing that summer would come.

Now there were people in the heavens, and when they found that summer was going down to the earth through the hole in the floor, they cried out to the Great Spirit, "Take summer away from him, take it away from him!" and they shot their arrows at the fisher and the wolverine. The wolverine dropped through the hole, but the fisher was not quick enough, and he could not get away.

The Great Spirit said, "The heavens have the summer all the year, but the earth shall have summer half the year. I shall close the hole in the floor so the fisher cannot go down to earth again, but I will make him into a fish and give him a place in the heavens."

When the Indians look up at the sky, they see a fish in the stars, and they say, "That is the good fisher who gave us the beautiful summer."

THE STORY OF THE FIRST SNOWDROPS

AN old man sat alone in his house. It was full of shadows; it was dark and gloomy. The old man cared nothing for the shadows or the darkness, for he was thinking of all the mighty deeds that he had done. "There is no one else in the world," he muttered, "who has done such deeds as I," and he counted them over aloud. A sound outside of the house interrupted him. "What can it be?" he said to himself. "How dares anything interrupt me? I have told all things to be still. It sounds like the rippling of waters, and I have told the waters to be quiet in their beds. There it is again. It is like the singing of birds, and I have sent the birds far away to the south."

Some one opened the door and came in. It was a youth with sunny curls and rosy face.

"Who said you might come in?" muttered the old man.

"Did not you?" asked the youth, with a merry little laugh. "I am really afraid that I came without asking. You see, every one is glad to see me and"--

"I am not," interrupted the old man.

"I have heard rumors of your great deeds," said the youth, "and I came to see whether the tales are true."

"The deeds are more true than the tales," muttered the old man, "for the tales are never great enough. No one can count the wonderful things I have done."

"And what are they?" asked the young man gravely, but with a merry little twinkle in his eyes that would have made one think of the waves sparkling in the sunlight. "Let us see whether you or I can tell the greatest tale."

"I can breathe upon a river and turn it to ice," said the old man.

"I can breathe upon the ice and turn it to a river," said the youth.

"I can say to water, 'Stand still,' and it will not dare to stir."

"I can say, 'Stand no longer,' and it will go running and chattering down the mountain side."

"I shake my white head," said the old man, "and snow covers the earth."

"I shake my curls," said the young man, "and the air sparkles with sunshine. In a moment the snow is gone."

"I say to the birds, 'Sing no more. Leave me,' and they spread their wings and fly far away."

"I say, 'Little birds, come back,' and in a moment they are back again and singing their sweetest songs to me."

"No one can count the leaves," said the old man, "but whether I shake the trees with my icy touch, or whether I turn my cold breath upon them, they fall to the ground with fear and trembling. Are there any rumors of my deeds as great as that?"

The young man answered gravely, but with a laugh in his voice, "I never saw any leaves falling to the ground, for when I appear, they are all fair and green and trembling with the gladness of my coming."

So the two talked all night long. As morning came near, the old man appeared weary, but the youth grew merrier. The sunlight brightened, and the youth turned to the open door. The trees were full of birds, and when they saw him, they sang, "O beautiful spring! glad are we to look again upon your face."

"My own dear birds!" cried spring. He turned to say good-by, but the old man was gone, and where he had stood were only snowflakes. But were they snowflakes? He looked again. They were little white snowdrops, the first flowers of spring, the only flowers that can remember the winter.

WHY THE FACE OF THE MOON IS WHITE

AN Indian chief had a fair young daughter. One day the wind came to him and said, "Great chief, I love your daughter, and she loves me. Will you give her to me to be my wife?"

"No," answered the chief.

The next day the maiden herself went to the chief and said, "Father, I love the wind. Will you let me go with him to his lodge and be his wife?"

"No," declared the chief, "I will not. When the wind was a child, he often came into my wigwam through some tiny hole, and try as I would to make my fire, he always put it out. He knows neither how to fight nor how to hunt, and you shall not be his wife."

Then the chief hid his daughter in a thick grove of dark spruces. "The wind might see her in a pine," he thought, "but he will never catch sight of her in a grove of spruces."

Now the wind could make himself invisible if he chose, and all the time that the chief was talking, the wind was close beside him listening to every word. When the next night came, the wind ran round and round the grove of spruces until he discovered a tiny place where he could get in. When he came out, the maiden was with him. He did not dare to go near the Indians to live, for he was afraid that the chief would come and take her away from him; so he built a new lodge far to the northward. To that lodge he carried the maiden, and she became his wife.

Neither the wind nor his young wife had thought that the chief could ever find them, but he searched and searched, and at last he came to their lodge. The wind hid his wife and made himself invisible, but the father struck all about with his great war-club, and a hard blow fell upon the head of the wind. He knew no more of what the chief was doing.

When he came to himself, he discovered that his wife was gone, and he set out in search of her. He roamed about wildly in the forest, and at last he saw her in a canoe with her father on the Big-Sea-Water. "Come with me," he called. She became as white as snow, but she could not see the wind, because after the blow upon his head he had forgotten how to make himself visible.

He was so angry with the chief that he blew with all his might upon the tiny canoe. "Let it tip over," he thought. "I can carry my wife safely to land." The canoe did tip over, and both the chief and his daughter fell into the water. "Come, dear wife," cried the wind. "Here is my hand." He did not remember that he was invisible, and that she could not see his hand. That is why she fell down, down, through the deep water to the bottom of the lake. The chief, too, lost his life, for the wind did not try to help him.

When the wind discovered that his wife was gone from him, he became almost wild with sorrow. "The wind never blew so sadly before," said the people in the wigwams.

The Great Spirit was sorry that the chief's daughter had fallen into the water and lost her life, and the next night he bore her up to the stars and gave her a home in the moon. There she lives again, but her face is white, as it was when she fell from the canoe. On moonlight nights she always looks down upon the earth, searching for the wind, for she does not know that he is invisible. The wind does not know that far away in the moon is the white face of his lost wife, and so he roams through the forest and wanders about the rocks and the mountains, but never thinks of looking up to the moon.

WHY ALL MEN LOVE THE MOON

THUNDER and Lightning were going to give a feast. It was to be a most delightful banquet, for all the good things that could be imagined were to be brought from every corner of the world.

For many days before the feast these good things were coming. The birds flew up with what they could find in the cold air of the north and the warm air of the south. The fishes came from the east and from the west with what they could find in the cold water or in the warm water. As for what grew on the earth, there was no end to the luxuries that came every morning and every evening. Squirrels brought nuts, crows brought corn, the ants brought sweet things of many kinds. Food that was rich and rare came from India and Japan. The butterflies and the humming-birds were to arrange the flowers, the peacocks and the orioles promised to help make the place beautiful, and the waves and the brooks agreed to make their most charming music.

Thunder and Lightning were talking about whom to invite, and they questioned whether to ask the sun, the moon, and the wind. These three were children of the star mother.

"The star mother has been so kind to us that I suppose we ought to invite her children," said Thunder.

"The moon is charming, but the sun and the wind are rough and wild. If I were the star mother, I would keep them in a corner all day, and they should stay there all night, too, if they did not promise to be gentle," said Lightning.

"We must invite them," replied Thunder, with what sounded much like a little growl, "but it would be delightful if they would agree to stay away, all but the moon."

That is why the sun and wind were invited as well as the moon. When the invitation came, the two brothers said to their little sister, "You are too small to go to a feast, but perhaps they asked you because they were going to ask us."

"Star mother, I think I will stay at home," said the moon tearfully.

"No, little moon," replied the star mother, "go to the feast with the other children."

So the three children went to the feast, and the star mother waited for them to come home.

When they came, she asked, "What did you bring for me?" The hands of the sun were full of good things, but he said, "I brought only what I am going to eat myself," and he sat down in a corner with his back to the others, and went on eating.

"Did you bring anything for me?" she asked the wind.

"I brought some good things halfway home, and then I was weary of carrying them," answered the wind, "so I have eaten them."

"I should never have imagined that you would be so selfish," said the star mother sadly, and she asked the little moon, "My daughter, did you bring anything for me?"

"Yes, star mother," answered the little moon, and she gave her mother more good things than any one had ever seen in their home before. There were rare luxuries that the fishes and the birds had brought. There were rich colors that the peacocks and orioles had promised, and there was even some of the charming music that the waves and brooks had agreed to make.

The star mother praised the little maiden. Then she looked at her two boys. She was sad, for she knew that they must be punished for their selfishness. "Sun," said she, "you wish to turn your back on all, and your punishment shall be that when the warm days of summer have come, all men will turn their backs on you." To the wind she said, "Wind, you thought of no one but yourself. When the storm is coming and you are afraid and fly before it, no one shall think of you. All men shall close their doors against you and fasten them." Then to her little daughter she said, "My little moon, you were unselfish and thoughtful. You shall always be bright and beautiful, and men shall love you and praise you whenever they look upon your gentle, kindly face."

This is why men hide from the sun and the wind, but never from the moon.

WHY THERE IS A HARE IN THE MOON

MANY strange things happened long ago, and one of them was that a hare, a monkey, and a fox agreed to live together. They talked about their plan a long time. Then the hare said, "I promise to help the monkey and the fox." The monkey declared, "I promise to help the fox and the hare." The fox said, "I promise to help the hare and the monkey." They shook hands, or rather shook paws. There was something else to which they agreed, and that was that they would kill no living creature.

The manito was much pleased when he heard of this plan, but he said to himself, "I should like to make sure that what I have heard is true, and that they are really gentle and kind to others as well as to themselves. I will go to the forest and see how they behave toward strangers."

The manito appeared before the three animals, but they thought he was a hunter. "May I come into your lodge and rest?" he asked. "I am very weary."

All three came toward him and gave him a welcome. "Come into our lodge," they said. "We have agreed to help one another, so we will help one another to help you."

"I have been hungry all day," said the manito, "but I should rather have such a welcome than food."

"But if you are hungry, you must have food," declared the three animals. "If there were anything in our lodge that you would care to eat, you might have part of it or all of it, but there is nothing here that you would like."

Then said the monkey, "I have a plan. I will go out into the forest and find you some food."

When the monkey came back, he said, "I found a tree with some fruit on it. I climbed it and shook it, and here is the fruit. There was only a little of it, for fruit was scarce."

"Will you not eat part of it yourself?" asked the manito.

"No," answered the monkey. "I had rather see you eat it, for I think you are more hungry than I."

The manito wished to know whether the fox and the hare would behave as unselfishly toward him, and he said, "My good friends, the fruit was indeed welcome, but I am still hungry."

Then the fox said, "I will go out into the forest and see what I can find for you."

When the fox came back, he said, "I shook the trees, but no more fruit fell. I could not climb the trees, for my paws are not made for climbing, but I searched on the ground, and at last I found some hominy that a traveler had left, and I have brought you that."

The manito had soon eaten the hominy. He wished to know whether the hare would behave as kindly as the others, and before long he said, "My good friends, the hominy was indeed welcome, but I am still hungry."

Then the hare said, "I will gladly go out into the forest and search for food." He was gone a long time, but when he came back, he brought no food.

"I am very hungry," said the manito.

"Stranger," said the hare, "if you will build a fire beside the rock, I can give you some food."

The manito built a fire, and the hare said, "Now I will spring from the top of the rock upon the fire. I have heard that men eat flesh that is taken from the fire, and I will give you my own."

The hare sprang from the rock, but the manito caught him in his hands before the flame could touch him, and said, "Dear, unselfish little hare, the monkey and the fox have welcomed me and searched the forest through to find me food, but you have done more, for you have given me yourself. I will take the gift, little hare, and I will carry you in my arms up to the moon, so that every one on the earth may see you and hear the tale of your kindness and unselfishness."

The Indians can see a hare in the moon, and this is the story that they tell their children about it.

itself into a Japanese lantern. "Now put a candle inside," said the voice, "and you have paper holding fire. What more could you ask?"

Then the older woman was happy, but the younger was still sad. She saw now that fire could be carried in paper, but surely no one could carry wind. "O dear voice," she cried, "can any one carry wind in paper?"

"That is much easier than to carry fire," replied the voice, "for wind does not burn holes. Watch."

They watched eagerly. Another piece of paper came all by itself and lay on the ground between them. There was a picture on it of a tree covered with white blossoms. Two women stood under the tree, gathering the blossoms.

"The two women are yourselves," said the voice, "and the blossoms are the gifts that the father-in-law will give you when you go home."

"But I cannot go home," the younger wailed, "for I cannot carry wind wrapped in paper."

"Here is the paper, and there is always plenty of wind. Why not take them?"

"Indeed, I do not know how," the younger woman answered sorrowfully.

"This way, of course," said the voice. Some long, light twigs flew to the paper. It folded itself, over, under, together. It opened and closed, and it waved itself before the tearful face of the younger woman. "Does not the wind come to your face?" asked the voice, "and is it not the fan that has brought it? The lantern carries fire wrapped in paper, and the fan carries wind wrapped in paper."

Then, indeed, the two young women were happy, and when they came to the home of their father-in-law, he was as glad as they. He gave them beautiful gifts of gold and silver, and he said, "No one ever had such marvels before as the lantern and the fan, but in my home there are two more precious things than these, and they are my two dear daughters."

THE END
