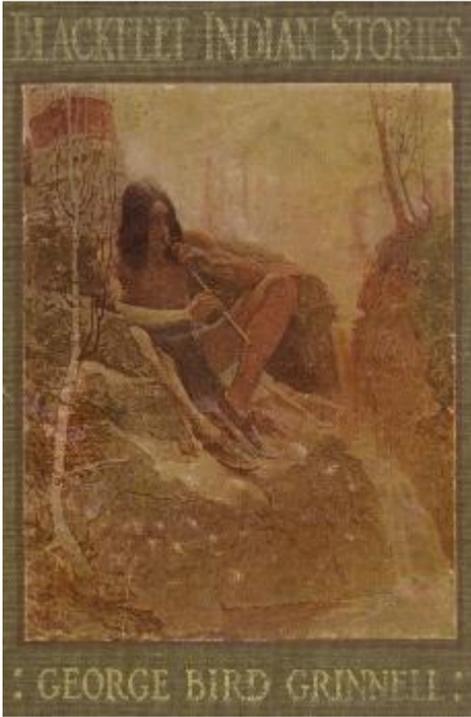




Cold Maker



BLACKFEET

INDIAN STORIES

BY

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TO THE READER

Those who wish to know something about how the people lived who told these stories will find their ways of life described in the last chapter of this book.

The Blackfeet were hunters, travelling from place to place on foot. They used implements of stone, wood, or bone, wore clothing made of skins, and lived in tents covered by hides. Dogs, their only tame animals, were used as beasts of burden to carry small packs and drag light loads.

The stories here told come down to us from very ancient times. Grandfathers have told them to their grandchildren, and these again to their grandchildren, and so from mouth to mouth, through many generations, they have reached our time.

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Blackfeet Indian Stories

TWO FAST RUNNERS

Once, a long time ago, the antelope and the deer happened to meet on the prairie. They spoke together, giving each other the news, each telling what he had seen and done. After they had talked for a time the antelope told the deer how fast he could run, and the deer said that he could run fast too, and before long each began to say that he could run faster than the other. So they agreed that they would have a race to decide which could run the faster, and on this race they bet their galls. When they started, the antelope ran ahead of the deer from the very start and won the race and so took the deer's gall.

But the deer began to grumble and said, "Well, it is true that out here on the prairie you have beaten me, but this is not where I live. I only come out here once in a while to feed or to cross the prairie when I am going somewhere. It would be fairer if we had a race in the timber. That is my home, and there I can run faster than you. I am sure of it."

The antelope felt so glad and proud that he had beaten the deer in the race that he was sure that wherever they might run he could beat him, so he said, "All right, I will run you a race in the timber. I have beaten you out here on the flat and I can beat you there." On this race they bet their dew-claws.

They started and ran this race through the thick timber, among the bushes, and over fallen logs, and this time the antelope ran slowly, for he was afraid of hitting himself against the trees or of falling over the logs. You see, he was not used to this kind of traveling. So the deer easily beat him and took his dew-claws.

Since that time the deer has had no gall and the antelope no dew-claws.

THE WOLF MAN

A long time ago there was a man who had two wives. They were not good women; they did not look after their home nor try to keep things comfortable there. If the man brought in plenty of buffalo cow skins they did not tan them well, and often when he came home at night, hungry and tired after his hunting, he had no food, for these women would be away from the lodge, visiting their relations and having a good time.

The man thought that if he moved away from the big camp and lived alone where there were no other people perhaps he might teach these women to become good; so he moved his lodge far off on the prairie and camped at the foot of a high butte.

Every evening about sundown the man used to climb up to the top of this butte and sit there and look all over the country to see where the buffalo were feeding and whether any enemies were moving about. On top of the hill there was a buffalo skull, on which he used to sit.

One day one of the women said to the other, "It is very lonely here; we have no one to talk with or to visit."

"Let us kill our husband," said the other: "then we can go back to our relations and have a good time."

Early next morning the man set out to hunt, and as soon as he was out of sight his wives went up on top of the butte where he used to sit. There they dug a deep hole and covered it over with light sticks and grass and earth, so that it looked like the other soil near by, and placed the buffalo skull on the sticks which covered the hole.

In the afternoon, as they watched for their returning husband, they saw him come over the hill loaded down with meat that he had killed. When he threw down his load outside the lodge, they hurried to cook something for him. After he had eaten he went up on the butte and sat down on the skull. The slender sticks broke and he fell into the hole. His wives were watching him, and when they saw

him disappear, they took down the lodge and packed their dogs and set out to go to the main camp. As they drew near it, so that people could hear them, they began to cry and mourn.

Soon some people came to meet them and said, "What is this? Why are you mourning? Where is your husband?"

"Ah," they replied, "he is dead. Five days ago he went out to hunt and he did not come back. What shall we do? We have lost him who cared for us"; and they cried and mourned again.

Now, when the man fell into the pit he was hurt, for the hole was deep. After a time he tried to climb out, but he was so badly bruised that he could not do so. He sat there and waited, thinking that here he must surely die of hunger.

But travelling over the prairie was a wolf that climbed up on the butte and came to the hole and, looking in, saw the man and pitied him.

"Ah-h-w-o-o-o! Ah-h-w-o-o-o-o!" he howled, and when the other wolves heard him they all came running to see what was the matter. Following the big wolves came also many coyotes, badgers, and kit-foxes. They did not know what had happened, but they thought perhaps there was food here.

To the others the wolf said, "Here in this hole is what I have found. Here is a man who has fallen in. Let us dig him out and we will have him for our brother."

All the wolves thought that this talk was good, and they began to dig, and before very long they had dug a hole down almost to the bottom of the pit.

Then the wolf who had found the man said, "Hold on; wait a little; I want to say a few words." All the animals stopped digging and began to listen, and the wolf said, "We will all have this man for our brother; but I found him, and so I think he ought to live with us big wolves." All the others thought that this was good, and the wolf that had found the man went into the hole that had been dug, and tearing down the rest of the earth, dragged out the poor man, who was now almost dead, for he had neither eaten nor drunk anything since he fell in the hole. They gave the man a kidney to eat, and when he

was able to walk the big wolves took him to their home. Here there was a very old blind wolf who had great power and could do wonderful things. He cured the man and made his head and his hands look like those of a wolf. The rest of his body was not changed.

In those days the people used to make holes in the walls of the fence about the enclosure into which they led the buffalo. They set snares over these holes, and when wolves and other animals crept through them so as to get into the pen and feed on the meat they were caught by the neck and killed, and the people used their skins for clothing.

One night all the wolves went down to the pen to get meat, and when they had come close to it, the man-wolf said to his brothers, "Stop here for a little while and I will go down and fix the places so that you will not be caught." He went down to the pen and sprung all the snares, and then went back and called the wolves and the others—the coyotes, badgers, and kit-foxes—and they all went into the pen and feasted and took meat to carry home to their families. In the morning the people found the meat gone and all their snares sprung, and they were surprised and wondered how this could have happened. For many nights the nooses were pulled tight and the meat taken; but once when the wolves went there to eat they found only the meat of a lean and sickly bull. Then the man-wolf was angry, and he cried out like a wolf, "Bad-food-you-give-us-o-o-o! Bad-food-you-give-us-o-o-o-o!"

When the people heard this they said to one another, "Ah, it is a man-wolf who has done all this. We must catch him." So they took down to the piskun pemmican and nice back fat and placed it there, and many of them hid close by. After dark the wolves came, as was their custom, and when the man-wolf saw the good food, he ran to it and began to eat. Then the people rushed upon him from every side and caught him with ropes, and tied him and took him to a lodge, and when they had brought him inside to the light of the fire, at once they knew who it was. They said, "Why, this is the man who was lost."

"No," said the man, "I was not lost. My wives tried to kill me. They dug a deep hole and I fell into it, and I was hurt so badly I

could not get out; but the wolves took pity on me and helped me or I would have died there."

When the people heard this they were angry, and they told the man to do something to punish these women.

"You say well," he replied; "I give those women to the punishing society. They know what to do."

After that night the two women were never seen again.

1 A pen or enclosure, usually – among the Blackfeet – at the foot of a cliff, over which the buffalo were induced to jump. Pronounced pĩ skũn.

KŪT-O-YĪS', THE BLOOD BOY

As the children whose ancestors came from Europe have stories about the heroes who killed wicked and cruel monsters—like Jack the Giant Killer, for example—so the Indian children hear stories about persons who had magic power and who went about the world destroying those who treated cruelly or killed the Indians of the camps. Such a hero was Kūt-o-yīs', and this is how he came to be alive and to travel about from place to place, helping the people and destroying their enemies.

It was long, long ago, down where Two Medicine and Badger Rivers come together, that an old man lived with his wife and three daughters. One day there came to his camp a young man, good-looking, a good hunter, and brave. He stayed in the camp for some time, and whenever he went hunting he killed game and brought in great loads of meat.

All this time the old man was watching him, for he said in his heart, "This seems a good young man and a good hunter. Perhaps I will give him my daughters for wives, and then he will stay here and help me always."

After a time the old man decided to do this, and he gave the young man his daughters; and because these three were his only children he gave his son-in-law his dogs and all his property, and for himself and his wife he kept only a little lodge. The young man's wives tanned plenty of cow skins and made a big fine lodge, and in this the son-in-law lived with his wives.

For some time after this the son-in-law was very good and kind to the old people. When he killed any animal he gave them part of the meat, and gave them skins which his mother-in-law tanned for robes or for clothing.

As time went on the son-in-law began to grow stingy, and pretty soon he gave nothing to his father-in-law's lodge, but kept everything for his own.

Now, the son-in-law was a person of much mysterious power, and he kept the buffalo hidden under a big log-jam in the river. Whenever he needed food and wished to kill anything, he would take his father-in-law with him to help. He would send the old man out to stamp on the log-jam and frighten the buffalo, and when they ran out from under it the young man would shoot one or two with his arrows, never killing more than he needed. But often he gave the old people nothing at all to eat. They were hungry all the time, and at length they began to grow thin and weak.

One morning early the young man asked his father-in-law to come and hunt with him. They went to the log-jam and the old man drove out the buffalo and his son-in-law killed a fat buffalo cow. Then he said to his father-in-law, "Hurry back now to the camp and tell your daughters to come and carry home the meat, and then you can have something to eat." The old man set out for the camp, thinking, as he walked along, "Now, at last, my son-in-law has taken pity on me; he will give me some of this meat."

When he returned with his daughters they skinned the cow and cut it up and, carrying it, went home. The young man had his wives leave the meat at his own lodge and told his father-in-law to go home. He did not give him even a little piece of the meat. The two older daughters gave their parents nothing to eat, but sometimes the youngest one had pity on them and took a piece of meat and, when she could, threw it into the lodge to the old people. The son-in-law had told his wives not to give the old people anything to eat. Except for the good heart of the youngest daughter they would have died of hunger.

Another day the son-in-law rose early in the morning and went over to the old man's lodge and kicked against the poles, calling to him, "Get up now and help me; I want you to go and stamp on the log-jam to drive out the buffalo." When the old man moved his feet on the jam and a buffalo ran out, the son-in-law was not ready for it, and it passed by him before he shot the arrow; so he only wounded it. It ran away, but at last it fell down and died.

The old man followed close after it, and as he ran along he came to a place where a great clot of blood had fallen from the buffalo's wound. When he came to where this clot of blood was lying on the

ground, he stumbled and fell and spilled his arrows out of his quiver, and while he was picking them up he picked up also the clot of blood and hid it in his quiver.

"What are you picking up?" called the son-in-law.

"Nothing," replied the old man. "I fell down and spilled my arrows, and I am putting them back."

"Ah, old man," said the son-in-law, "you are lazy and useless. You no longer help me. Go back now to the camp and tell your daughters to come down here and help carry in this meat."

The old man went to the camp and told his daughters of the meat that their husband had killed, and they went down to the killing ground. Then he went to his own lodge and said to his wife, "Hurry, now, put the stone kettle on the fire. I have brought home something from the killing."

"Ah," said the old woman, "has our son-in-law been generous and given us something nice to eat?"

"No," replied the old man, "but hurry and put the kettle on the fire."

After a time the water began to boil and the old man turned his quiver upside down over the pot, and immediately there came from it a sound of a child crying, as if it were being hurt. The old people both looked in the kettle and there they saw a little boy, and they quickly took him out of the water. They were surprised and did not know where the child had come from. The old woman wrapped the child up and wound a line about its wrappings to keep them in place, making a lashing for the child. Then they talked about it, wondering what should be done with it. They thought that if their son-in-law knew it was a boy he would kill it; so they determined to tell their daughters that the baby was a girl, for then their son-in-law would think that he was going to have another wife. So he would be glad. They called the child *Küt-o-yis'* – Clot of Blood.

The son-in-law and his wives came home, bringing the meat, and after a little time they heard the child in the next lodge crying. The son-in-law said to his youngest wife, "Go over to your mother's and

see whether that baby is a boy or a girl. If it is a boy, tell your parents to kill it."

Soon the young woman came back and said to her husband, "It is a girl baby. You are to have another wife."

The son-in-law did not know whether to believe this, and sent his oldest wife to ask the same question. When she came back and told him the same thing he believed that it was really a girl. Then he was glad, for he said to himself, "Now, when this child has grown up, I shall have another wife." He said to his youngest wife, "Take some back fat and pemmican over to your mother; she must be well fed now that she has to nurse this child."

On the fourth day after he had been born the child spoke and said to his mother, "Hold me in turn to each one of these lodge poles, and when I come to the last one I shall fall out of my lashings and be grown up." The old woman did as he had said, and as she held him to one pole after another he could be seen to grow; and finally when he was held to the last pole he was a man.

After Küt-o-yis' had looked about the lodge he put his eye to a hole in the lodge-covering and looked out. Then he turned around and said to the old people, "How is it that in this lodge there is nothing to eat? Over by the other lodge I see plenty of food hanging up."

"Hush," said the old woman, raising her hand, "you will be heard. Our son-in-law lives over there. He does not give us anything at all to eat."

"Well," said the young man, "where is your piskun—where do you kill buffalo?"

"It is down by the river," the old woman answered. "We pound on it and the buffalo run out."

For some time they talked together and the old man told Küt-o-yis' how his son-in-law had abused him. He said to the young man, "He has taken from me my bow and my arrows and has taken even my dogs; and now for many days we have had nothing to eat, except sometimes a small piece of meat that our daughter throws to us."

"Father," said Küt-o-yis', "have you no arrows?"