

**CLASSICS TO GO**  
**THE PUNISHMENT  
OF THE STINGY**



**GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL**

**The Punishment  
of the Stingy**

**George Bird Grinnell**



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## THE STORIES AND THE STORY-TELLERS

The stories in this book deal with peoples of widely different surroundings and habit—some with dwellers on the sea-shore, whose skies are often obscured by rain and fog, who draw their living from the sea, and are at home on the water; and others with inhabitants of the high plains, where the air is pure and dry, and the summer sun is rarely hidden by clouds.

As the Indians have no written characters, memorable events are retained only in the minds of the people, and are handed down by the elders to their children, and by these again transmitted to their children, so passing from generation to generation. Until recent years, one of the sacred duties of certain elders of the tribes was the handing down of these histories to their successors. As they repeated them, they impressed upon the hearer the importance of remembering the stories precisely as told, and of telling them again exactly as he had received them, neither adding nor taking away anything. Thus early taught his duty, each listener strove to perform it, and to impress on those whom he in turn instructed a similar obligation.

In transcribing stories such as these, care must be used to take down just what the narrator says. The stories must be reproduced as they are told; otherwise they lose that primitive flavor which is often one of their chief charms. In their true form they are full of human nature, full of unconscious suggestion as to how the primitive mind worked, and full also of hints as to the customs and life of the people in the old days.

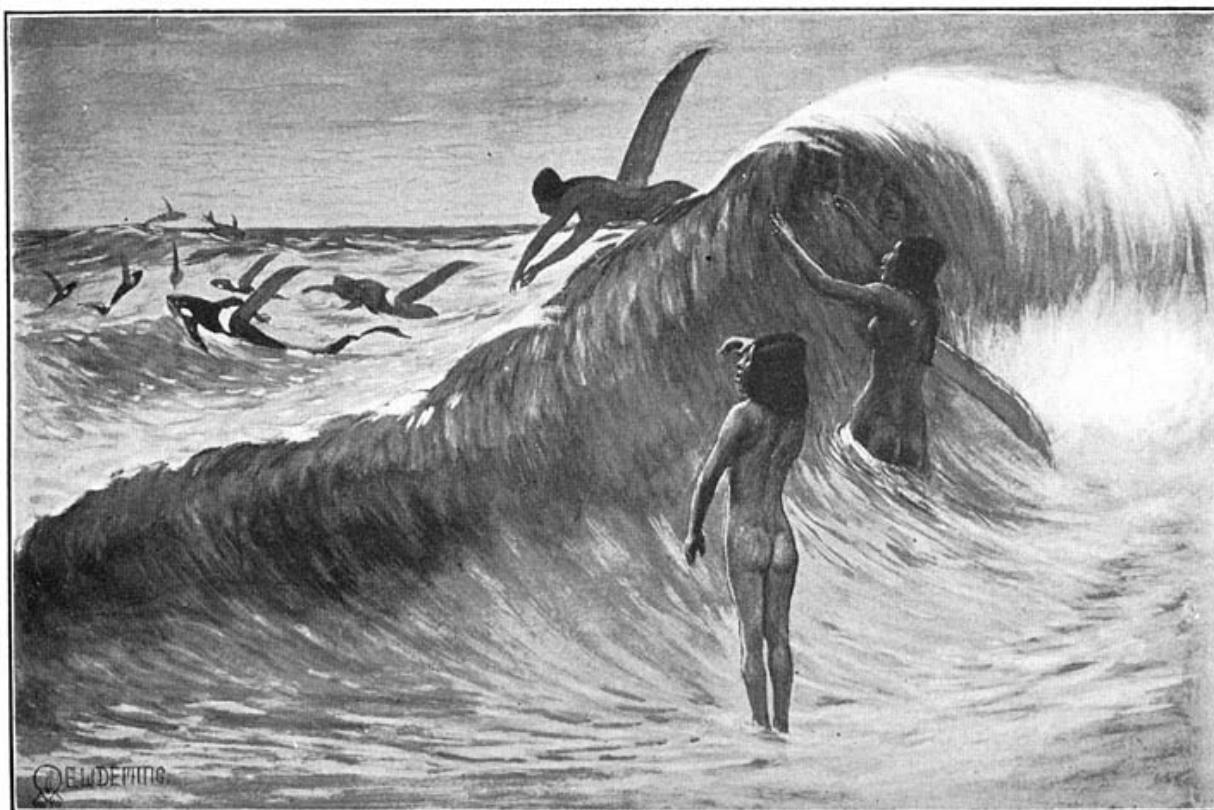
Seated by the flickering fire in Blackfoot skin-lodge, or in Pawnee dirt-house, or in sea-shore dwelling on the northwest coast, I have received these stories from the lips of aged historians, and have set them down here as I have heard them.

## THE BLUEJAY STORIES

On the shores of the ocean which washes our northwest coast live many tribes of a hardy, seafaring people. Their houses stand along the beach just above high-water mark, and behind them the wooded mountains rise sharply. The waters at their feet yield them the chief share of their living. The salmon that each year come to the rivers to spawn, the great shoals of little herrings that visit the beach, the halibut that lie at the bottom far at sea, the seals, the sea-lions, the porpoises, and the whales, all provide something towards the tribe's support. Or, if for a while all these fail, there are flat-fish on the shoals, clams in the mud flats, and mussels clinging to the rocks. In the stories told by this race of seafarers, the incidents have to do with the common events of their lives, and the scenes are commonly laid on the water or at the water's edge. Thus they treat of the hunting of the sea-lion, of the catching of the salmon, most often of the search for food.

Most of the stories to be related here are very old, and date from a period when men and animals were far more closely related than they seem to be to-day; when, as the tales clearly show, each could understand the other's language, and when friendly intercourse between them was common. Although in recent years all the conditions of the lives of these people have changed, stories such as these may still be heard, if one can gain the confidence of the aged men and women who yet retain this legendary lore. In somewhat different form, the Bluejay Stories, in the original tongue, may be found in the Chinook Texts, collected by that eminent ethnologist, Dr. Franz Boas, whose studies of

American tribes have yielded such important and valuable results.



"THEN THEY WENT SEAWARD"



## A BLUEJAY STORY

At Sea Side lived many people—a big village. Their houses were on the bank, and, below, the wide beach sloped down to the salt water. Under the bank the canoes rested on the beach above high-water mark. Beyond was the sea.

One day the Chief of the village died. He had one son, a big boy just growing up to be a man. It was winter, and the people had hardly anything to eat. They looked along the beach for food cast up by the sea, but they could find nothing. They were hungry, and did not know what they should do. Mussels and roots were their only food.

One day a hunter said to the men: "Everybody get ready; let us go out to sea. Perhaps there we may find something to eat; even if we kill nothing, we can at least gather mussels."

So all the men got ready, and they started out to sea in two canoes. After they had gone some distance they came to a small island, and saw there some sea-lions, and the hunter speared one, and it jumped out to the water and swam strongly, and then it died and floated on the water. They dragged it up on the shore near by, and Bluejay said, "We will boil it here." So they made a fire there and singed it and cut it up and boiled it. Then Bluejay said: "Let us eat it here. Let us eat all of it, and not take any of it home with us." So these people ate there. The Raven wished to take home some of the meat to give to persons who were hungry, and hid a piece in his mat and carried it to the canoe, but Bluejay ran down and took the meat and threw it into the fire and burned it. After they had eaten all they wanted, they made ready to go home. They gathered mussels, large

and small. In the evening they came to the village, and Bluejay called out to his wife, "Stikuá, come and get your mussels." There was a noise of many feet as Stikuá and the other women came running down to get their mussels, and carried them up to the houses.

The Raven took care of the Chief's son. That night the boy said to him, "To-morrow I want to go with you." Bluejay said: "What are you going to do? The waves will carry you away. You will be washed away. I was almost washed away."

Early the next morning the men made ready to go hunting again. They went down to the beach and got into the canoes, and the boy also went down to the beach. He intended to go with them, and as they were pushing off he tried to get into one of the canoes. Bluejay said to him: "Go up to the houses. Go up to the houses." The boy went, as he had been told, but he felt very sorry, and then Bluejay said, "Quick, let us leave him." The people began to paddle.

At length they reached the land where they had been the day before. It was a rocky island. The hunter went ashore and speared a sea-lion. They hauled it to the shore and pulled it up on land, and then pulled it up away from the beach. Bluejay said, "We will eat it all here, or else our Chief's son will always be wanting to come with us." So now they singed the sea-lion, and cut it up and boiled it there. Then, when what they were cooking was ready, they ate plenty. The Raven tried to save one piece of the meat. He tied it in his hair, intending to hide it, but Bluejay took it out and threw it into the fire and burned it. When they started home they gathered mussels, and at evening they got home. Before they landed, Bluejay called out loud, "Come, Stikuá, and get your mussels." There was a noise of feet running, and Stikuá and her children came running to the beach with all the other women. Then they carried the mussels up to

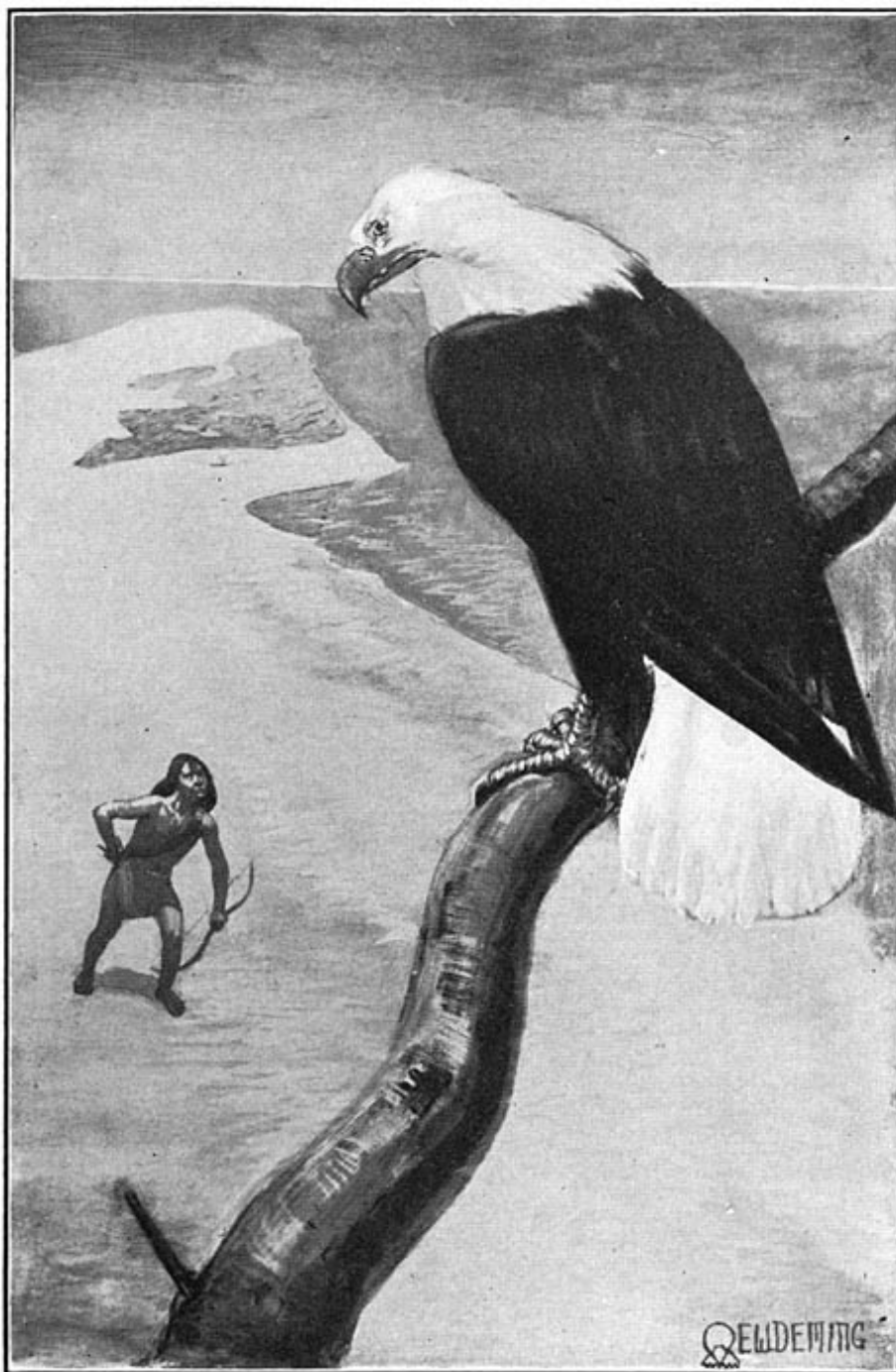
the houses. Bluejay said to the men who had been with him, "Do not tell the Chief's son, any of you, for if you do he will always go with us."

That night the boy said, "To-morrow I am going with you"; and Bluejay said to him: "What are you going to do? You may drift away. You may be overwhelmed by the waves." The boy said, "I will go with you."

On the third morning they rose early and went to the beach, and the boy also went to the beach, and took hold of the side of the canoe to get in. Bluejay said: "What are you doing here? Go to the houses." The boy cried, but he went back. Then Bluejay said to the others, "Quick, paddle; we will leave him behind." Then the people paddled away. At length they arrived at the rock of the sea-lions, and the hunter went ashore. He speared a large sea-lion, and pretty soon it floated dead on the water. They pulled it in to the shore and up on the beach, and then they hauled it up above the beach and singed and cut it up and boiled it there. When it was done they ate, and Bluejay said: "We will eat it all. We will not tell any one, for fear that our Chief's son should want to come with us." After all had eaten enough, a little meat was still left. The Raven tried to hide a piece of it. He tied it to his leg and put a bandage over it, and said that his leg was broken. Bluejay burned all the meat that was left over. He said to the Raven, "I want to see your leg." He seized the Raven's leg and untied it, and found the piece of meat that the Raven had tied to it and burned it. Towards evening they gathered mussels, and then they went home.

When they were nearly at their home Bluejay called out, "Stikuá, your mussels." There was a noise of feet, and Stikuá and the women ran to the beach. They carried the mussels up from the beach and ate mussels all night. The boy said, "To-morrow, I think, I shall surely go along with

you." Bluejay said to him: "What are you going to do? You will drift away. I should have drifted away twice if I had not caught hold of the canoe."



"HE SAW A BALD-HEADED EAGLE"

Early the next morning they made themselves ready, and the boy got up and made himself ready. Then the people hauled their canoes down to the water and got into them. The boy tried to get into a canoe too, but Bluejay took hold of him and threw him into the water. He stood in the water up to his waist. He took hold of the side of the canoe, but Bluejay hit his hands to make him let go. For a long time he held on, and cried and cried, but at last he let go and went up to the house. Then Bluejay and the other people paddled away. After a while they reached the rock where the sea-lions lived, and the hunter went ashore and speared a sea-lion, and it jumped into the water and soon floated there dead. Then they towed it to the beach and pulled it up and singed it, and cut it up and boiled it. Bluejay said, "We will eat it here." They ate for a long time and ate half of it, and then they were satisfied. They were so full that they went to sleep. After a while Bluejay awoke and burned all the meat that was left. Towards evening they gathered mussels and then started home.

When they were near the shore, Bluejay called out to his wife, "Come and get your mussels, Stikuá," and they heard the noise of feet running down to the shore. Then they carried up the mussels from the beach. That night the boy said, "To-morrow I shall go with you"; and Bluejay said to him: "What are you going to do? We may be thrown into the water and you may drown."

Early the next morning the men made ready to start. The boy also got up and made himself ready. Then Bluejay and the people hauled the canoes down to the water and got into them. The boy tried to get into the canoe, but Bluejay threw him into the water, and they pushed off. The boy caught hold of the side of the canoe and held it. He stood there in the water up to his armpits, and tried to get into the canoe, but Bluejay hit his hands and made him let go.

The boy cried and cried. Bluejay and the people paddled away.

After a little time the boy went up to the beach, feeling very sad, and trying to think what he should do. At last he went into the house and took his arrows and started walking along the shore. He walked around a point, and saw a black eagle, and shot it. He skinned it and tried to put the skin on his body, but it was too small. It did not reach down as far as his knees. He took it off and left it there and went on. After a while he saw another eagle, and he shot it, and it fell down. Its head was partly white. He skinned it and put the skin on his body, but it was too small. It reached down only a little below his knees. Then he took it off and left it lying there, and went on a long way. At last he saw a bald-headed eagle. He shot it, and it fell down. Then he skinned it and put the skin on himself. Even this was too small, but it nearly fitted him. Then he tried to fly. At first he could only fly downward. He could not rise in the air. He tried again, and this time he found that he could turn, so he kept on trying, and pretty soon he could fly well.