INOOSARSUK BECOMES AN INHABITANT OF GIANTLAND

At This the Giant Laughed So Loud That the Ocean Shook from Shore to Shore.

By IRIK CRUJNE

A VERY long time ago, according to the Eskimo legends, there lived in a fishing village an orphan boy called Inoosarsuk. He was a brave, industrious, good tempered boy, and you would suppose that his foster mother and foster father, having no children of their own, would have loved him very much. But the truth is that poor little Inoosarsuk had a very hard time.

"Inoosarsuk," his foster mother called to him one day when her husband, as usual, was away fishing, "I am hungry, but am tired of eating the coarse fish your father has brought home. So hurry and go out in the extra kayak (which is the Eskimo name for a fishing boat) and bring me home some frogfish."

"But my foster father has forbidden me to go out in the kayak," said the boy, much alarmed.

"He will never know of it. I myself will clean and dry the boat when you have brought it back. Go quickly, dear Inoosarsuk, and you and I will share the fish together." And the selfish woman fairly drove the child out upon the water in the fishing boat.

Although Inoosarsuk came back as promptly as he could, his foster mother did not find time to clean the boat as she had promised. And when her husband found that it had been used he accused the unfortunate child of disobedience and gave him a very dreadful beating, for he was a harsh, cruel man.

Some weeks later, when the boy's foster mother had forgotten this happening, she again called Inoosarsuk to her and directed him to go out in the fishing boat and bring her home some stalks of the quannek, which is a plant that the Eskimos find eatable. In vain the boy pleaded with his foster mother not to send him out, for he knew quite well that he should be beaten even more cruelly than before if it were discovered that he had again made use of the kayak. But the greedy woman insisted that she must have the quannek and faithfully promised the child that her husband should not know the boat had been touched. Poor Inoosarsuk felt very forlorn and sick at heart, for he knew well that if his foster mother really cared for him she would act quite differently. Nevertheless he rowed away to the spot where he thought he could pluck plenty of quannek.

But the plant proved, after all, very hard to find. And it was a long time before Inoosarsuk had collected an armful of stalks. Hurrying with this to the boat, he was horrified to find that the tide had risen and that one of the oars had floated away. The boy was so much at home in a boat that so far as his own safety was concerned he could manage quite well with one oar. But what would his foster father say when he learned that an oar was missing? Never in the world could this be concealed from him!

"He will surely kill me!" thought poor Inoosarsuk, in great distress. And then this thought came to him: "But why should I go home at all—to be scolded and beaten for what is not my fault? There can be no other place in the world where I would be as miserable."

So the child hastily prepared for his solitary journey into the unknown world. From an inner pocket of his coat he drew out two amulets, or charms, which he always carried with him. Holding one of these in each hand, he wished hard for fair weather, for it would not do to be overtaken by a storm so long as he should be in an open boat with only one oar at his disposal. The quannek and some fish that he had caught would serve him well for provisions. And so realizing with great excitement that he was having his first adventure, Inoosarsuk paddled gayly out into the open sea.

During a voyage of many days Inoosarsuk met no human beings whatever. But he saw many strange creatures in the air and upon the sea and began to feel as wild and as unafraid as they. Each hour was more interesting than the last, and so sweet was this innocent new freedom that he soon forgot altogether that he had ever lived in a hut in a fishing village with neglectful and unkind foster parents.

As he did not know at all in which direction he was journeying, Inoosarsuk was greatly surprised one morning to find that he was headed straight for a stretch of shining shore. He made up his mind that he would land, and in doing so took great care to avoid colliding with what seemed to be a massive gray rock that towered high above his head. So the boy shook with astonishment when the rock addressed him in a deep, bellowing voice and asked him his name. Looking more closely in the direction of the voice, Inoosarsuk now saw that the rock was no rock at all, but a giant, and a giant with such a jovial, good natured air that the boy couldn't longer manage to feel afraid. So in a shrill little voice, which he tried to make reach as far as possible, he politely answered the giant's questions, explaining that he had no home, and was now undertaking a long journey in order to see what the world was like.

"But the world must be larger than I thought," Inoosarsuk concluded, "for though I have been voyaging many days I can not even yet see the rim of it."

At this the giant laughed so loud that the ocean shook from shore to shore and Inoosarsuk's kayak rocked so violently that the little boy cried aloud for help. Seeing what he had done, the giant reached out a powerful finger and thumb and picked Inoosarsuk out of the water, boat and all.

"Now you are safe," he said, as he placed the boy and the boat in his open palm, "and as you are rather small and young to travel about the world by yourself, I think that if you do not object I will take you home with me."

"Oh, I should like that above all things," screamed Inoosarsuk in the direction of the giant's ear.

Sitting comfortably in his boat, which the giant carefully held in his open hand, Inoosarsuk had an excellent view of the icy country through which they passed and felt himself already growing very wise in knowledge of the world. After the giant had been walking for perhaps half an hour, crossing wide straits and high mountains each at a single stride, he said to his small companion, "Now we are at home."

"What do I see in the air ahead of us?" the boy asked. "It looks like a flying iceberg."

"Oh, that is my daughter's tame gull," the giant answered. "It is taking a little exercise."

At the sound of his voice the giant's daughter herself came out to meet them, and, after affectionately greeting her father, asked what he had brought for her. For answer the giant stretched out his hand, showing Inoosarsuk seated in his boat.

"Oh, what a dear little toy!" she exclaimed, with great delight. "I shall use it for an amulet."

All that evening Inoosarsuk was handled very tenderly, as if he were a valuable plaything, and before the giantess went to sleep she placed him carefully upon a shelf above her bed. For, in the giant's house, as in the fishermen's huts, the beds were only bunks placed against the walls of the room. As she had adopted Inoosarsuk as an amulet the giantess had forgotten to give him any supper and he was too shy to ask for any. So in the night he discovered that he was very hungry, and, noticing that some tempting food lay near the lighted lamp, he started to creep down and help himself. In order to do this he had to climb over the giantess herself, which roused her from her dreams with great suddenness. Seizing Inoosarsuk in her hand, she would have absent mindedly eaten him up if she had not happened to notice that he was her dear little amulet, to which she was already so much attached. Finding then that he was crying with hunger and fright, she got out of bed and gave him an abundant supper. But when the giant heard about this the next day he decided that Inoosarsuk was too small for safety, and, after persuading his daughter to give up her amulet, he spoke the magic words that were necessary to turn the little boy into a giant too. To Inoosarsuk then a boat was given that corresponded with his size, and always after this he lived in great contentment in the giants' country.

The Oldest Joke in the World

What is the oldest joke in the world? According to T. P.'s Weekly, it is the following, which is related in one of the Berlin papyri of the sixth Egyptian dynasty (about 3200 B. C.), and it should not be overlooked that in the days when the world was young a tale enjoyed centuries of verbal currency before it was inscribed in permanent form.

According to the papyrine, a certain scribe who worked for the Temple of Thoth occupied apartments where his neighbors on either side were a coppersmith and a carpenter, respectively. These honest artisans were exemplary specimens of industry, and kept up such a row all day and most of the night that the poor scribe was almost driven mad. At last by a stroke of craftiness he buttonholed each neighbor separately and bribed them to change their lodgings, which they did—with one another.

This tale has kept the world amused for 5,000 years—we often meet with it now—and it never seems to have occurred to anybody to wonder why the scribe did not change his own lodgings; but perhaps his rent was in such arrears, as sometimes happens to other literary gentlemen, that it was cheaper to bribe the two workmen.

Another perennial that runs the above hard for first place in point of age is that of the man who goes to buy some weighty article and carries it on his shoulder to save tiring the horse he is riding.—Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

Made Fun of Him

Every person has his or her little peculiarities, many of them, no doubt, very harmless, and yet things which in the eyes of other people appear ridiculous. Should they laugh at our queer ways or affectations, we are apt to feel hurt, if not angry, and yet we do not think it wrong to smile at some other person's eccentricities.

Wagner, the great composer, always received his visitors in a medieval costume, which he wore when composing. One day, Dumas, the novelist, called upon him at Bayreuth and, looking at his dress, laughed and said:

"Why, you are all dressed up to play 'Lohengrin.'"

The remark was made in a good natured way, but it rather jarred upon Wagner's feelings. Nevertheless, when he was next in Paris, he returned the novelist's visit.

After a little while Dumas came into the room clad in a rich dressing gown with a large flower pattern, a helmet with waving plumes, a life belt around his waist and enormous riding boots.

"You must really pardon me," he said to his atonished visitor, in a tragic tone, "for appearing in my working clothes, but I can do nothing if I am not dressed up this way. Half my ideas are in this helmet, and the other half are to be found in my boots. The latter are indispensable to me when I am writing about soldiers and battles."

Wagner never called upon Dumas again.