

# LITTLE CROWLING BIRD IN WINDEGO LAND



One morning Nokomis found some Strawberry Blossoms among the grass growing about the Wigwam. "Waugh!" she said, "O-day-e-min (Heart-Berry) soon be ripe; time to plant Mun-dau-min, the Corn!" She knew it was the month of June, the Strawberry Moon, and that it was high time to begin planting if she would have a good supply of meal for the winter. So she told Aundak, the Crow, to fly to the Hollow Oak, where Big Bear slept, and tell him she wanted him to help plant the Corn. She then brought out her corn hoes—which were made of flat pieces of flint-stone, ground sharp and fastened with thongs to long wooden handles—and made up a pack of food and cooking utensils to take along to the cornfield. The children carried the baskets of seed corn and Growing Bird shouldered a little hoe.

When they came to the field Nokomis made a fire and put some meat in a kettle to cook. Then she and Growing Bird began to hoe narrow trenches in the soil, while Yellow Hair followed them, dropping a grain of corn at every step. The Indians were the first to grow "Maize." That is why it is called "Indian" Corn! Because Big Bear's claws were so long he could not grasp a hoe-handle very well, he busied himself pulling up roots and snags and picking and piling stones too heavy for Nokomis to lift. Aundak and Little Bear "helped" by hunting along the trenches for worms and grubs, of which queer kind of food they were rather fond. Hoeing corn is pretty hard on little boys' backs, and Growing Bird was not sorry when the seed was all planted and dinner ready.



Nokomis spread a clean white cloth on the ground and helped them all to meat from the kettle. There were also fresh-baked corn cakes with maple syrup, and every one had all he could eat—except, of course, Little Bear. In the meantime a great many Wild Crows had gathered and sat perched on a dead tree, watching and cawing loudly. They thought they would have a fine time scratching up the corn as soon as Nokomis and the others went home. But in this they were mistaken—as you shall see!

Nokomis knew well enough what the Wild Crows were waiting for, but she intended to disappoint them. She told Growing Bird and Big Bear to get two long sticks and tie them together in the form of a cross, and set it upright with the white tablecloth draped over it, like a blanket. She made a round bundle of grass and tied a red handkerchief over it; then with a burnt stick she drew a picture of a horrible, horrible face! Little Bear ate all the scraps and lay down behind a log to take a nap.

After they had planted the framework in the ground, and piled stones around it to keep it firm, they hung the white cloth over the arms, while Nokomis tied the horrible-looking head on top of it. She fastened a feather and bunches of grass on it, making it wilder than ever. Little Growing Bird tied the frying pan to one of the arms, and a big stone hanging by a string close beside it. The least bit of wind would have swung the stone against the iron pan and made a great clatter! It was enough to scare the boldest Wild Crow that ever cawed!



When they gathered up their things, preparing to start home, they did not notice Little Bear sleeping behind the log. They supposed he had gone on ahead of them, and so did not worry about his absence. When the Wild Crows drew near they saw a ghastly-looking figure guarding the cornfield, and when the wind made the stone strike the iron pan with a bang, like the sound of a war-gong, they were panic-stricken, and flew off in every direction! Little Bear, of course, knew nothing of all this. He was sleeping, but his sleep was troubled. He had gorged himself and had a bad dream about a fierce Windego that was sitting on his stomach. Suddenly the gong clanged out, "DING!" he awoke, and up he jumped in a fright!

He thought it was the ogreish Windego of his dream, and that his time had come! He gave one yell and tumbled over backward, then rolled and scrambled toward the tree at the edge of the clearing! Every time the gong struck he thought the Monster had him in its clutches, but he managed to reach the shelter of the woods at last, and then made the run of his life for home and Nokomis! He came tearing along the path just as the children reached the Wigwam and discovered that he was not inside. "My, how they all laughed when he told what a 'narrow escape' he had had! And that is how it came about that farmers put an old suit of clothes on a stick and set it up in the cornfield to fool the Wild Crows. They call it 'SCARECROW'—but Aundak says it should be called a 'SCAREBEAR'!"