

Canada has been well served by Professor Capone, whose students in recent years have been the first to be granted degrees in Canadian literature by an Italian university. The high quality of her achievement in this work is suggested by a comparison of *Canada, Il Villaggio della Terra* with English-Canadian books on Québécois literature.

Camille R. La Bossière

CLAUDE MÉLANÇON

Indian Legends of Canada

Translated from the French by
David Ellis
Toronto: Gage Publishing, 1974.
Pp. 163.

This is a collection of thirty-four native Canadian legends and folktales which belong to Indian tribes from the Atlantic coast and the Eastern Woodlands (part one), the Prairies (part two), and the Pacific coast (part three). About half of these are from Eastern Canada, the other half from Central and Western Canada. Since genuine folklore usually has mixed literary value, selection of material is important when offering folklore to the public.

Claude Mélançon favors the stories of the Micmac tribe, the first Indians met by Jacques Cartier in 1535. The Glooscap legends of the Micmac are indeed fascinating; Glooscap is a gigantic, supernatural figure of Micmac and Malecite mythology who taught the Indians how to hunt and fish, how to recognize certain plants for medicine, and how to predict the weather by looking at the stars.

Several stories of the Ojibway Indians are also included in the volume. Many deal with Nanabozho, the man-god, son of the sun, the creator of nature, and protector of the Indians. The Iroquois Indians, a powerful and civilized group, who, at one time, were a great threat to other Indians and even to New France, are also represented in this collection. Their relatively ancient and advanced culture is

reflected in their stories which deal with the happiness not only of man, but also of animals and plants.

Although the Huron language is extinct, their stories are extant. The Hurons believed the earth to be an island, floating in the ocean, supported by a turtle. There was peace on that island before the first bloodshed when a stag gored a bear with its antlers. The blood dripped onto the leaves of a maple tree, and, as a result, the maple leaves become red in the fall in Canada. The Great Spirit punished the stag by causing it to lose its antlers every year before the winter.

Probably Claude Mélançon did not have enough space to include everything he wanted. One grave oversight is that no mention is made of Cree, a member of the same language family as Micmac and Ojibway and the most widely spoken Algonquian language in Canada.

All stories presented in Mélançon's book were originally noted down in an Indian language and appeared later in either English or French. These translations do not destroy the beauty of the stories, since the translators try to imitate the Indian words and expressions, thus giving a peculiar charm to their style. For instance, instead of saying "when he was twenty years old," we read, "after twice ten springs had gone by." Instead of "in the evening," they say, "when Black Wolf had swallowed the light of day and it was no longer possible to look for a trail," etc.

The folklore of Canada's Indians is extremely rich and their stories would fill many volumes. For this reason, one understands why Claude Mélançon omitted many narratives. All stories included in this book, however, have their indisputable beauty and literary value.

Laszlo Szabo