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Two Unpublished Stories by Fannie Hardy Eckstorm

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Concerning the Incredible Loyalty of Big Sebat
the son and adopted son of Sebat

"Of Big Sebat Mitchell. Yes, a long time ago. You know um Sebat?"

Assuredly, One need not have grey hairs to remember Sebat, for it is scarcely ten years since he died. Memories of him were not unpleasant; they recalled kindly acts and thoughtful deeds and wise forbearance; seeing only his unweildy bulk and black Indian face one could hardly have believed that the two were consistent. Sebat was not a handsome man; he used rather more than the requirement of bear's grease on his big black head; his eyes troubled him, and he had a way of filling up the round hole between upper and lower lip with the tip of his tongue which must have put in danger from the teeth; gentlemen weighing nearly three hundred may be well-groomed but they are not ordinarily captivating. Those who saw only the exterior of Big Sebat could not remember him as I did, as a man of serious and generous notions, with a love of justice and a desire to see good instead of evil, solicitous for the best interests of his tribe but a citizen(without rights) of the United States. There was only one point upon which he wavered in his loyalty and that was whether his loyalty to the country at large would have borne the strain if it had called him to ~~cease being a Penobscot man~~. His Indiandhood he might have resigned; his adoptive rights at Quoddy, where he married the old governor's daughter and resided sixteen years, he never emphasized; but he was ~~too proud to boast it~~ that he was born Penobscot. This story turned on that.

"I have a story of Big Sebat when he was driving for Bradbury on the Magaguadavic which exactly supplements your

your story of his pride in the superior skill of the Penobscot boatman and I will tell it to you when I come down,"

But a pestilent bullet laid him below before we ever met again, and so to get the story I had to go seeking elsewhere.

"You knowum Big Sebattis?" A little hush fell upon both of us, as we thought of old bygone things.

"Yes— well; well, that time you see she work it Ol' Isaac Bladdy. Much as eight years she work it Isaac on Maccadavy ribber-dribin'. You see S'battis is berry good ribber-driber; she don't go on logs 'cause too heaby, but in boat she ben boss number one ribber-driber. You know she Benobscot man but she maffy in Quoddy and cause ooman don' wan' leabe ol' folks an' old gov'ner she blin' an' berry ol', mor'n hunderd years old when died, well, S'battis she staid dere sixteen years It was Quoddy she learned it how sail canoe so, bes' man Penobscot tribe sailin' canoe, an' great hand seal shootin' an' porpoise huntin' cause Quoddy folks she get her libbin' dose way. But still S'battis she Bencobscot man; she t'ink mor e fun runnin' quick water 'n gettin' drowned out to sea seal shootin', so when sprin' come she ebry year gone ribber0-dribin'.

Well, you see, lo-ong time ago was year war broke out Den all white folks she gone war. Injuns gone too 'cause liked it fun an' 'citemet an' cause good United States."

It was true enough; our Penobscot Indians served in all three branches of the service, infantry, cavalry and artillery, as well as sharp-shooters; and good men they were too though a trifle disconcerting to those who were not used to Indians. As witness the story one of them told of himself

*It was a rather small boat, but they were a good lot. The engine was
+ took them a while to get started. The boat did not change but fired on the
hook*
of the capture of some small defense. The works were ours
when ~~John Brown~~ *needed on the ship of the rebels* said he saw a hand waving a newspaper above the logs
"Well, you see we took good aim an' fired; don' seen um
hand no more. When we gone up dere we found um off'cer, *capt*
with arm blowed up; hit um *right* elbow, run straight up *above* wrist,
smash um arm *just* all pieces. She berry mad. 'Don' you seen um
newsbaber? We surrender." Yer, we seen um newsbaber, but *we don't know what for;*
when we seen lebel we s'oot!" They were good soldiers
but perhaps a trifle over-conscientious about putting down the
rebellion. *How do you feel when you kill a man? How do you feel when
kill um rabbit (rabbit)? This is the same thing.*

However, Sebattis had no part in that. His nature was
pacific, and he was at home at Quoddy all through the war.

"Well, sprin' war broke out S'battis Mitchell went on
dribe in Province for Ol' Isaac, up Maccadavy. By jolly
dose e'er great times. You see Province man them time hate
um Yankee; she want seen um lickbad. She say Hope dBwn south
she lick you all heall.

The truth of this I knew. Did I not have that little
silk United States flag which the Maine States Survey of
1861 carried down the St. John River with them, making their
it was a great sight after Black River
boats the target of continual insults all the way and almost
bringing on bloodshed. It was very true.

Well that time bime by Old Isaac got it his dribe
down to MacDougall's Falls. Jim Lee he live near that place,
an' she bad place, by jolly! but she wicked ol' hole, don'
no one try to run McDougall's falls, nebber anybody run dat
place ~~No one was caught at Sumter was so fired on that 15th of April~~
and this as I happened to be sure was the 22 of May.

Now you see war ben broke out 'bout mont'—"

He was right. Sumter was fired on the 15th of April, and this as I happened to be sure was the 1st of May. — an' Province folks he was gettin' cross. S'battis she big man an' she clever man an' she slow but when reached it McDougall falls she mos' hot. Joe Orson he was dere dat time, Penobscot Injun an' speak so Sebattis, Spos'n you an' me we run it dose falls stop mout' dese feirer pooty quick If Yankee run her falls first time den she can' talk so big.

Sebattis posing as a Yankee! But mark you these Indians are loyal Congress gave them medals with Washington's name and face on them for services in the Revolution, both Penobscot and Quoddy tribes had medals and earned them fairly. If they had not been loyal what think you that the British might not have done in 1812 when they held both the St. Croix and the Penobscot There were almost as many Indians as whites near Bangor then, and had they not been both Christian and friendly ill would it have happened with the war-whoop and the scalping knife among the scattered settlers of the state of Maine.

So Joe and Sebattis made their way to Bradbury to announce that they were going to run McDougall's Falls for the first time. They wanted the loan of a batteau; probably they almost the same as demanded the boat

Now Bradbury was their friend and had no reason to wish to see them drowned. He was likewise a head lumberman and all head lumbermen whatever the follies of their youth in the way of smashing boats feel tenderly toward their own batteaus, The boats are to the drive what the pack train or the wagon train is to an army; without them there is nothing

*And Orson
long before in
Bangor, Pen.
settling war time*

possible. One can almost hear the conversation.

"Isaac, we want um boat?

"What do you want a boat for Sebattis?

"We want run dose eer falls.

"Can't do it.

"We can do it

"No one ever did do it."

"Well we told you we could do it an' we goin' try me'n Joe Orson.

Sebattis, you can't do it; you'll get drowned both of you an' you'll smash my boat.

We paid for it boat; you can took it pay out of wages; we give you wighiggin now; s'pose we got drowded an' lost you boat you can had it pay for boat.

Good for Sebattis and Joe Orson! A boat was worth upwards of seventy dollars— and be sure they would not choose the worst one— and yet here were two poor, illiterate Indians, so sure of the idea they swere contending for, so anxious to prove the supremacy of their countrymen, these Indian Yankees, that they bid nearly three week's wages each of them, for the privilege of getting drowned in their own way.

But Isaac only said Tut! tut! and turned away He knew all about what fools men were when it came to running boats over falls. The less said the better. He knew too that when a man was determined to run he would steal a boat if he had to and defy the owner. Oh! there are many things that a man learns who is head lumberman.

perhaps. being a head lumberman he turned away on purpose that if they wished to carry out their plan he might not be forced to interfere. Oftentimes the Quaker in the head lumberman waited while the natural man rejoiced.

Then Joe and Sebattis debated in Indian seriously and it was surmised that they intended to brook no interference with their project. There was the boat; they were good for its value; it was Hey and come on boys!

"Aw, you aint the first ones that ever run tjem falls; you needn't feel so big?" spoke up a Province man bystanding.

"Hugh! what you said?"

"Those falls has been run."

"Naw!" "You don' mean it!"

"Two days ago".

Then were Joe and Sebattis more than ever excited. It should never be said that if they were the first the province men were the only ones who had dared to run McDougall's falls. But a white man standing by, even Isaac himself it is said spoke up: "Who was it did it?"

"Oh Jim White and Dave Libbey that's been up here digging knees this winter, run it Sunday all right"

(Elsewhere I have told how Jim White and David Libbey ran the falls and how eight days later coming down with another drive of knees, for they had but four men and had to divide their little drive, they generously took in the brother-in-law and cousin to share the fun and ran it a second time with more courage than reason though the happened to come out all right in the end.

Sebattis and Joseph turned slowly and looked at each other. Sebattis grunted deeply. Joe waited the decision of his chief. Slowly it came; for it was a disappointment not to be the first ever to run McDougall's falls, and yet in a way he was satisfied.

"She Benobscot man so all right; spos'n ben province man we run em sure!"

The credit of his country was saved; he had no need to risk their lives— and it was their lives verily that were at stake. But the question comes and that is the fine point about the loyalty and the ambitions of Sebattis, What would he have done if, instead of being Benobscot men they had been Kennebeckers?

ON OLDTOWN FALLS.

The rumble and churning a fall, even a great one, is insistent only for a short time; then everyone near it becomes accustomed to its undertone and only on Sundays and still clear evenings of early spring do those who live near to it hear it. At other times they see the white flash of tumbling water, the suds and vapor below the falls and it causes neither admiration for its beauty nor wonder at its strength, it being for six days in the week the servant of the mill, the strong slave of man. So Oldtown Falls is now chained to the great woolen mill and turns thousands of spindles and weaves a web as mysterious to itself as the lady of Shalott's. Everybody thinks of the web, no one of the growling slave bound to the wheels below; from it has passed all the glamor of romance, all the picturesqueness of red shirts and trooping lumbermen; even the Indians who live just above wear the cloth of the mill and no longer buckskin and feathers. But once upon a time — Sweep away the woolen mill; destroy all the habitations of the white man; make the tall pines grow once more over road and landing; restore the smooth-edged falls to their primitive raggedness, broken with ledge and island, but steep, impetuous, strong. It was a cosy nook for the Indian, a good camping ground where shad and salmon ran up in countless numbers red-fleshed, red-finned, gay in their fishy brightness and glittering like silver as with net and spear the

Indian drew them in, his feast of fatness after the hunger-pains of scanty winters. He loved the place and here he had his old town. Today the whiteman has taken even the name; to the Indian is left only the little island above the falls where the river, parted by it above, joins again before sweeping down over the falls. It is very quiet now yet though the loveliness and the picturesqueness of the past is gone the place is not without interest to the stranger. Each year may come hither to visit the Indians, to buy a basket of a curio, to have a quiet canoe ride with a real Indian, even to look at the falls by the woolen mill. There is no place about where the stranger more enjoys his brief visit and there we conduct our guests

ON OLDTOWN FALLS.

(Item 102 in)
Whitten's thesis
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A great woollen mill has tamed the falls now. They are still there rumbling and churning as in the days when they were the feature of the river that commanded most attention, but they look dwarfed and for six days in the week they toil sullenly at their task of turning spindles. Only on Sundays and clear bright evenings in April do the weary townsfolk, sitting in their doorways comment on the sound of the falls which at such times rises over the tumult of the day. There is danger from them still, for ill comes to the boatman who forgets that they are below him; but a stranger to them ^{and} to the ways of mills might pass by without ever seeing they were there, and that in the old days of logs and lumber, when men lived by the River could never happen. The very carry past them spelled "falls" And the falls meant more to the Indian than they did to the lumberman; they were his fishing place where in the spring he dipped or speared the red-finned shad and the golden-meated salmon when the water ran brown with the freshet and the shad-bush flung out its white banners all along the River. Such a place of plenty and of feasting was it that the Indians here established their old town. Even the name ^{has} been preempted by the whites together with the site and the falls and the fishing. The Indians withdrew to a spot a little less convenient, that smaller island next above the falls which is hugged by the current where the arms of the river lock below it to push downward toward the falls. The current is strong from the Indian Island to the landing on the white man's shore, but he does not mind it, and

he probably does not know that his own ancient site and chosen dwelling place, his natural abode is usurped by the great mill beside the falls. He is a patient man this Indian, not prone to dwell upon old injuries or losses; there is no bitterness in him, and his memory is short. Yet one thing he does remember, that the falls are there, and not as the slave of the mill but as the enemy of whoever forgets that from the Indian island to the other shore a man must lay a straight course and hold well against the current and never, never get into the grip of the current that pulls down upon that white curtain of tumbling water, dissolving in mist and foam. The men who have forgotten have died, all but thrice Sam Jewell went over once with the logs and came out alive. He would have saved himself if he could and no one was more surprised than himself at finding him alive at the end of it. And twice men have dared the falls deliberately. Theirs is the greater glory and of them we speak.

Do you know how warm and cosy it can be on Indian Island along in June, after the ground is dry enough to lie down on and yet before the withering heat of July has driven everyone to the thickest shade. The grass is growing tall then, buttercups in bloom and daisies budding and the first wild strawberries are ripening under their leaves. Old Tomer Sebattis, black and wrinkled—(it must have been a long time ago, for I find his name on my grandfather's books in 1844 and in his later years, which my father remembers, he was, living no longer at Oldtown but at Lincoln)—was building a canoe out

under the maple behind his little hut S squatting against the tree-trunk, with his old stone pipe in his mouth he shaved the cedar ribs for his canoe and laid them by in pairs each pair of a different length. There was the smell of white cedar freshly cut, a strong delicious aromatic fragrance from this sandalwood of the north, and in the pile of shavings burrowed and rolled two fat little Indian boys, with beady black eyes, burrowing through the shavings like big mice at play, Louis Porus and Peter Newell we may name them

"Oh, Petah, Petah, dem's my toe you ^{let} squeeze it!" squealed Peter who just at present was an otter. They were both otters by the way and the shaving were their slide and, like the real animal they were gliding down the heap and then wriggling back and up the other side with arms folded on their breasts. "Dem's my toe!" In a playful mood the other otter had bitten the bare foot of his leader in the game.

"Aw, she so brack!" remarked Louis "We thought mus' be so she otter tail; she wiggle like orter ta-ail. Grandfadder, what for orter she had it long lound tail, musquas' she like orter, had it leetle flat t'in, tail all scaly like she's fish, what for?"

There's nothing in this world without a reason behind it. The little Indian child is just as prompt as his white brother to ask What for? and his elders, wise in generations of unwritten lore, had amassed a hoard of answers that when the question was put to them they might not be bankrupt.

"Wh' for, grandfadder?"

Two little round black heads, two pairs of round black eyes, like the heads and eyes of seals emerged from the shavings

Old Tomer Sebattis drew his crooked knife toward him with slow precision, leaving the cedar satin-smooth. He squinted along it before he lay it by its mate to measure and compare.

(Edna L. p. 122)
"Ugh-huh! a long time ago!" Thus begin all Indian legends. Speak so berry ol' folks — a long time ago den you see all annymiles she could talk. Den dat time orter she had leetle tail olike musquas' and musquas' she hab it ber' big fine tail; alwers she look it ober her shoulder musquas' seen it her nice big tail

"One day speak so orter, _Berry nice tail you got it; ber' han'dsome beeg tail; we got it leetle mean tail. Spose you took it our tail leetle while, let us had it your tail see how it look seen you own tail.

"Den musquash' she pr-raoud had it big annymile like orter talk to him, called it nice tail. Speak so 'Yes, we lend it our tail leetle while'. S po she swapped it tails.

"Now orter she gone raound palyin' showin' tail, jump al time, look it at his tail

"Musklat look lound see his leetle tlail, he's s'amed he says he want swap back

"Orter say, _No, we keep it our new tlail

"Now musklat he always look lound see it his leetle tlail, he s'amed, always he dlag it 'hind him."

The little boys bobbed heads to one another with confirmatory grunts. "uhhuh! Erhugh! Dem's so! You seen ~~us~~ musquas' she look it 'hind him: dem's so!"

"But musquas' tail she's good eat it; ~~orter~~ she don' good noddin!" remarked Peter

"Pitsonungun!" responded Louis

"Nah!" remarked his mate in disgust; "don' hold noddin"

"Do!" remarked Peter taking a lunge from his heap of shavings, an otter once more, and sliding across Louis's back. It looked like a squabble, rare among Indian children.

"Na, na!" cautioned the old man; "not, like white boy!" Really an Indian child could not be as rude as white child. The comparison made them very much ashamed. "A long time ago," began the old man to attract their attention and the two little seals came to order at once on their heap of shavings. Then old Tomer Seattis told them all about the Ahlermbaguenosesuc, the little men that live down under the water, water spirits, harmless little nixies and merry, who dance round and round in Indian dances, stiff-kneed to the ^{little} music of shotted horns.

"Alumbaguenosis— sis he's little, nosis, little man alumbague, lives under water, what called em Oonahgemessuck to Quoddy. She's good little folks; don't hurt men.

"Who seen 'um?" asked the boys.

"We-ell, you see long ti-me ago when old folks gone out on water — den look down over canoe — den seen 'um in water all dancin', all singin' all makin' gr-reat celebration — like Fourt' July". The old man came back to white men's times after all for his comparison.

"Where granfadder? where seen um?"

"In water, in still water, when ca-a-am; berry good time she had it under water

"And in falls? she dance in falls too?"

The old man shook his head.

"Why not? whuffor she don't got carried down over falls?" went on his questioner.

The old man shook his head again.

"Don' little folk live under falls?"

The old man's head shook vigorously

"What? "

A look of horror came into the face of the old man.
There is one thing, ^{chief among many} that the Indian dreads; more than once
his tribe had seen this monster, this horned worm rise
from the boil and spatter of the surging torrent, monstrous
insatiate, destroyer "Wee willliarmek!" he whispered
hoarsely in a voice that froze them; and they looked at
each other with rising terror, and they were long still
burying themselves deeper in the yellow shaving that
no shape of dread might see them, for they knew the weewil-
liarmek, as did all Indian boys fifty years ago. The old
man shaved his canoe ribs with his crooked knife and bent
them about his knee in trial curves. Gradually the little
boys regained their speech.

"Ah, granfadder, ain't he never ben anybody over
Oldtown Falls?"

"Yer", grunted the old man

"An' he run it all right?" continued the lad
eagerly

"Naw; she come out daid, spos'n she eber found em
"Always?" (in horror) "always she et it weewiliarmek?"

"But once" responded the old man briefly

The nudged him to draw his attention; they begged the
story from him. Slowly he drew himself to it; for the past
is not clear to the Indian— a mist hangs before his memory
of events gone by from which the vision emerges slowly
What emerged was a vision of spring time when the water
was brown with the spring rains and the current ran

full freshet, flooding out the lower foot of the falls and making them a gliddery incline rather than a straight fall; then the coral red of maple bloom, the silvery haze of poplar catkins and the white banner of the shad-bush are flung out. The shad run up the river then; they gather below the falls and men dip them the great flat fellows with sides like silver and bellies pink beneath. One remembers the scales of them dislodged by the dip-net and clinging to its meshes to drop like a drop of silver. It was at just this time of year and the shad were running; by this old Tomer Sebatitis remembered the incident; for Gappiel Soccalexis had been flipping shad and Gappiel saw it all

"You see dose days was young men," began the old man; "she's always wantin' done somet'ing somebody else don' done; she's always looking chances extinguish herself; cause always so with young men. One day in spring of year was two young men out in canoe jus' paddlin' for fun; she's nice day, bright sun, make young men feel good. Speak so one You spo'ise on did pitch water could run it Oldtown Falls? An udder one he say, Yeh, anyone can ^{do} idat now— he great what you call 'em brag; he t'ink udder fellow will say No. I tell you he miss his guess! By jolly, said dat boy, I goin'! So he ^{do} gun paddle stret for Oldtown falls. Great deal she roar deose e'er fall; she know she got 'em; never was man went ober Oldtown Falls alive Well, odder one she don' dare say No cause laugh at him on Island; she can' pull back now if she want to, cause cureent got 'em now, mus' go, Dey was good grit dose e'er boys. Old Gappiel seen um comin pullin all she was

worth right on he d of pitch of Oldtown Falls; he can' holler an holler don' stop em now; he know she gone; but he seen um hair blow straight out in wind hind um an' he seen um laugh just when current took em over falls. She ain' noddin' more seen, cause Oldtown Falls joos gra-ab um.

An wewilliahmek?"

"Spit 'em out!" remarke the old man with disgust; don' like taste of fools Canoe she all broke, but young ~~man~~ me hold fast to canoe bars and she stick somehow whiel- in' tumblin' knockin' out in rapids. All spile canoe but boys she's saved. She says she knows som'n now she didn't know fore; she knows all rocks on Oldtown Falls an' nebber agin she go in bad place she can keep out of; speaks so old men, mebbe now you make it good waterman one deses days, cause only fool she willin' risk his life for nottin' an' only fool an' dead man can go over Oldtown Falls.

"An no one gone over since dat time?" asked the little boys.

The old man shook his head "Too great risk. She dead man sure.

But granfadder, you'd dare go? you good waterman!"

The old man shook his head. It might be fine to stand well in the eyes of the rising generation but he knew that life was still too dear to him to throw it away on Oldtown falls.