

# **Disappearance of Mother Corn**

By Charles Elkhair  
Told to M. R. Harrington

Corn was said to be a living Spirit. In days of old some young boys, making light of the idea of Corn being humanlike, said to one another, "Corn could not possibly leave the earth." Then the Corn disappeared and before them was the danger of great famine staring them in the face, much to their regret.

At this time some person was blessed with a token from the Great Spirit, saying, "Unless they could find someone who had the gift or power to communicate with the Spirit of Corn and coax to humor the Corn that it might return, it would cause a continual famine."

When that Corn began to disappear, the heart of Corn turned into living beings, and all began disappearing in flight with wings.

A man who had communicated with the great Spirit was told, by token, the cause of the loss of Corn and all other vegetables was because the boys or young men had made unnecessary remarks about the Corn and its Spirit, therefore the Misingw or "whole face," being the leading Spirit, was sent with the token to warn members of the tribe the great wrong the young men had committed, in their estimation.

One man is quoted as saying that corn could not get away from him, and he filled a great skin bag and always placed it under his head at nighttime, when he suddenly realized that his sack had disappeared, went to flight in form of a weevil.

It was a great mystery as to who could restore Mother Corn. They had learned that there was two boys very poor and needy who lived with scant means. They being informed of the conditions, they came to the great gathering of the people, where they offered their services to restore Corn. They possessed the mystic power and spirit.

At the gathering the Indians were sitting in a ring, when the boys departed at nighttime, not leaving any clue as to how. But when the boys reached the great region above, there they made a burnt offering out of mussel shell, sacrificing the shells for the return of Corn. Mother Corn said she would return by request of the boys who were sent. They returned and brought the glad tidings, each bringing with them a handful of Corn and the pledge that Corn would never leave again. It is supposed that these boys took flight like the Corn.

The Corn famine had been in progress one year before the people found by what means they could induce the Corn to return and did induce her by the influence of the two boys. Upon coming to the region above, the boys found the Spirit Corn was in the image of an aged woman appearing to be a scabby person,

indicating that it was because the people had misused her. She said, "When Corn was being oftentimes parched, my children did me this great wrong. There are other ways to handle me. For instance, use tallow or other means to moisten me."

When they visited her, it was then they made the burnt offering of the shells. Mother Corn refusing to come back to earth at first, they went away in distress but by the sacrifice with the shells, they brought Mother Corn. She wanted to partake of the offering, but was refused unless she would promise to return in the required time to earth, to which she finally consented.

It was God's will that the Spirit Corn abide in the far heavenly region in image of an aged woman with dominion over all vegetation.

So this tradition comes from our forefathers, said to have happened before the discovery of this continent by the paleface, and centuries beyond. Thereby we know that Corn was here at the discovery of this continent.

The Corn was divided until quantities were again raised, and it is still retained. We are told that the mystic power possessed by the two boys is the means of getting Mother Corn to stay by the oath, to never leave this earth and her children again. She being in image of a woman, it was the custom of the red man to have the woman to care for and culture the Corn always, dressing neatly as visiting, when they were in the field to work and cultivate Corn, and in husking the same. Always they planted flour Corn and hominy Corn.