

The Wizard of the Miramichi



The Wizard of the Miramichi

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Written and produced by Miramichi Literacy Writers, a Project of the Literacy Corps Program, Employment and Immigration, Canada, sponsored by Miramichi Literacy Council, New Brunswick

Readability Level 3.9

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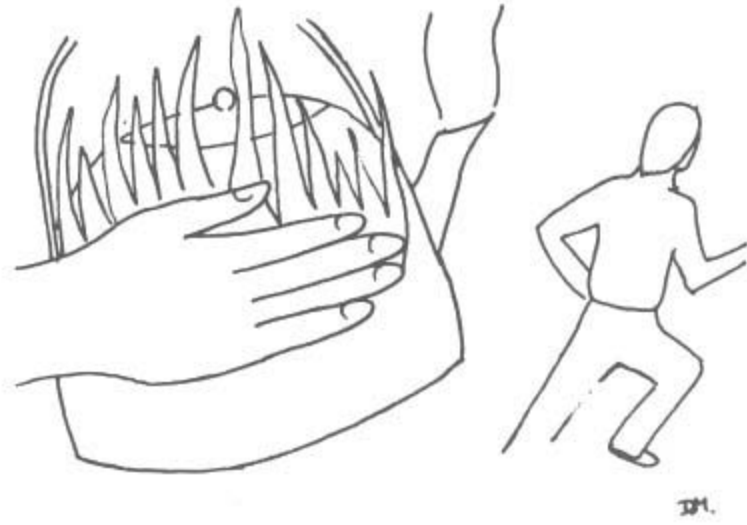
ISBN-0-920709-12-5

Miramichi Literacy Council - Miramichi Literacy Writers series

This series of booklets are available to anyone who wishes to order them. A single copy is \$3.00, any 3 books would be \$8.00 and a complete set of 24 would be \$60.00. Shipping and handling are extra.

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Acknowledgements: We wish to acknowledge support funding from the Governments of Canada and the Province of New Brunswick, especially the Departments of Education and Continuing Education.



THE WIZARD OF THE MIRAMICHI

CHAPTER I

There are several stories told of strange happenings on the Miramichi. These stories are of great interest to many people. Let me tell you the story of a man named Will. He was known as the Wizard of the Miramichi.

Will lived with his brother on a big farm near Chatham. They didn't have any of the farm equipment farmers have today. But that didn't matter. Will could do the work of a hundred men. All he needed was some help from his magic book. Will also got help from his good friend. Who was this friend? Everyone believed it was the Devil.



Will and his brother's farm.

One day Will's brother rode into town. He left Will to gather up the hay from the field. Will gathered it up and tied it together. He waited for his brother to return. Suddenly, dark rain clouds gathered in the sky. Will reached for his magic book. He had to use his magic to get the hay into the barn. If he didn't use magic, the hay crop would be ruined there in the field. An electric storm flashed across the sky. Will read from his magic book. He jumped on the wagon which began to move by itself. There was no horse to pull it because his brother had ridden the horse to town.

The wagon moved slowly at first. Then it went faster and faster around the field. Will stood on the wagon and used his pitchfork to gather the hay. When he rode by the hay, he shouted strange words. The hay would jump six feet into the air and land on the pitchfork. Before the first drop of rain had fallen, Will had gathered the hay. It was safely stored in the barn.



Will gathering up the hay.

When Will's brother came home, he couldn't believe his eyes. The field was empty. He couldn't understand how Will had gathered the hay into the barn so fast. All he had to work with was a pitchfork. He didn't even have a horse to pull the wagon. How could one man empty a field of hay with a pitchfork and a horseless wagon? Will's brother was worried.

CHAPTER II

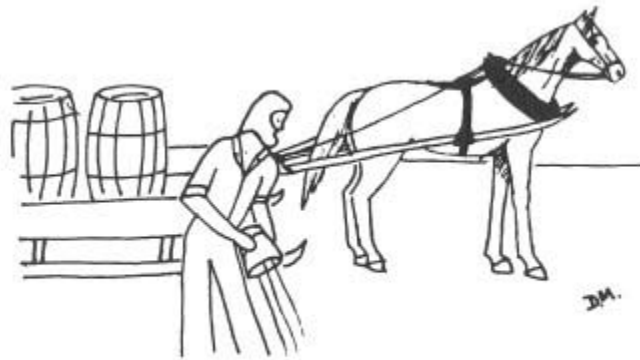
The neighbours soon heard of Will's strange powers. They told wild stories about him all over the countryside. Everyone believed that he was in league with the Devil. People began to avoid Will. Even his own brother found excuses to stay away from him. Will became very unhappy. He left the farm and went to work in the woods in a lumber camp.

Will was taken on in the fall at a big lumber camp on the Southwest Miramichi. The boss put him to work cutting logs. In those days, a strong man at a lumber camp could cut fifty logs a day. Will chopped one hundred and fifty logs every day. The men at the lumber camp thought Will was wonderful. They tried to cut as many logs as he did. Even the strongest man at the lumber camp could not cut as many logs a day as Will.



Will chopping logs.

Soon the men began to wonder. They noticed that Will never grew tired no matter how many logs he cut. They felt he had the power of the Devil. They became angry and worried. They went to the boss and asked him to fire Will. The boss didn't want to fire him. He was too good a worker. The boss put him to work watering down the roads. This would keep him away from the rest of the men.



Will watering down the road.

CHAPTER III

Watering down the roads was a good job for Will. Will worked on this job with one other man. It was a cold and wet job. He would haul a big drum of water to the road. He would then throw the water all over it. Soon the road would ice over. The logs could then be easily hauled over the smooth road.

One day when the driver and Will were working on the road, they stopped for lunch. The other man wanted some dry wood to light a fire. He was going to heat some water to make tea. Will told him he didn't need wood to heat the water. He took the pan into his hands. As soon as he touched the pan, it started to heat. Fire jumped from Will's hands. The driver started to scream. He was so frightened, he left his horse and ran for camp.

The day grew warm. It got so warm that the snow began to run like water. The frightened driver could run no farther. It was too hot. He made the sign of the cross and started slowly towards the lumber camp. A fog rose from the river. The ice on the logging road was gone. The men went back to work without their coats. They were frightened. What was happening? The ice on the road was gone. It was a mess. No one could use the road.

The boss told the frightened men they would have to repair the road the next day. They planned to do it after breakfast. Before they could leave the camp, Will came along. He told them the road was repaired. The boss thought Will was trying to be funny. The men went out to look at the road. They were now more frightened than ever at the sight that met them. The road was as good as new. The men looked at Will. They wished he would leave the camp.



Flames shooting from Will's hands.

CHAPTER IV

Later, another strange thing happened. The men were sleeping. Suddenly they woke up to the sound of sleigh bells. The sound got closer and closer until it reached the camp door. Then it stopped. The men ran to the door and looked out. There was never anyone there—no sleigh, no horses, no men and no footprints. The boss said that someone was just trying to frighten them. The men were worried. They said the sounds of the sleigh bells were a sign that something was going to happen. They thought that someone was going to die. Once again, the crew wanted the boss to fire Will. This time the boss was also upset, but he wanted peace in his camp. He said not to worry about the sound of the sleigh bells. He got the men to believe that Will was trying to frighten them.

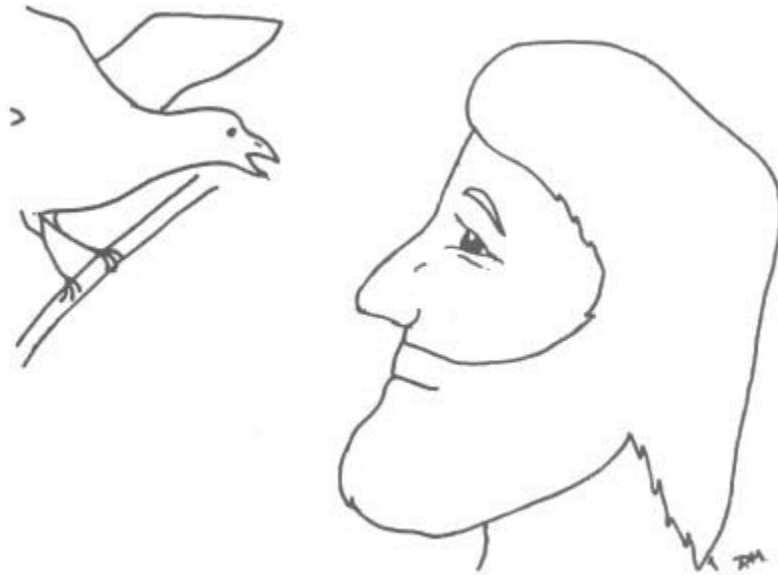


Ghostly sounds of sleigh bells.

Once again, the men went back to work with Will. They were still frightened, but they continued to work with him. Peace came to the lumber camp, but it was not to last.

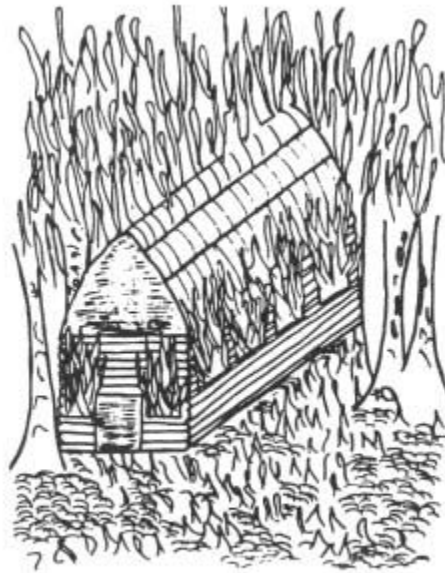
One day after working on the roads, Will came into camp. He said he had been talking to a strange bird. The men laughed at him. He told him that the bird had said, "Beware the night of the nineteenth." The men thought that Will was again trying to frighten them. But every day when Will got back to camp he would tell the same story. The bird kept telling him, "Beware the night of the nineteenth." Soon it was the night of the nineteenth. The lumber camp was covered with fresh snow. The men came into camp from the woods for dinner.

The men were happy. They were met by the smells of fresh bread and cake. They laughed at Will. They didn't think there was anything to be "beware" of. Will told them again the bird said, "Beware the night of the nineteenth." "This is the nineteenth."



The men washed, went in and sat down for supper. They noticed that a man called Stuart was missing. They found him in his bed. He was very sick. Could the bird's warning of "Beware the night of the nineteenth", have come true? The men stayed with Stuart all night. He didn't sleep well that night. The men tried to take good care of him, but it was no use. In the morning Stuart was dead.

This was not the end of it. One after another, the men fell sick and died. The Board of Health in Newcastle sent Dr. Nicholson and several other doctors into the lumber camp. Their medicine did not cure the sickness. No one knew what it was. It was decided that the only way to cure the sickness was to destroy it. They did this by burning down the camp. The bird's warning had come true.



The camp burning down.

CHAPTER V

The camp owner was nearly out of business. His lumber camp was gone. He had lost almost everything. There was no way to get his logs to the mills. He had no crew to get them there. All that was left of his camp were two horse barns. He cleaned one of the barns and built on to it. He put in new equipment. He took on a new crew. There were no more deaths at the camp, and his business was saved.

Will was one of the few men to live through the sickness. When the boss took on a new crew, Will wanted to stay. The boss said no. He told Will he never wanted to see him again. Will took his pay and left. Before he left, he told the boss something would happen. He said the boss would lose two of the best horses he had. That spring, two of the boss's best horses were lost in the Southwest Miramichi.

Will went to Chatham to get his pay at the bank. He had one hundred dollars coming to him. When he left the bank, he had enough money to "choke an elephant." No one knows where he got all the money. But it was enough to last him a long time. No one knows where he went. He was never seen or heard tell of again.

These stories are frightening. Are they true? Are people who you think they are? When you visit the Miramichi, look closely at the people you meet. Maybe the person you walk beside is not who you think he is! But then, too, every town you visit has some tall tales to tell. You may believe them or not!

WORD LIST

magic

field

hay

lumber

pitchfork

boss

gather

frighten

wagon

logs

beware

sleigh

Acknowledgement:

I wish to acknowledge Carole Spray, the author of Will O' The Wisp, from whose book the story, The Wizard of the Miramichi, was taken and reduced.