

Now the little table was drawn near the open fire, and placed upon it were three cups, a knife and three wooden spoons. Soon the old woman's quick ear caught the sound of footsteps; hastening to the door, she opened it. She was greeted by the merry voice of her grand-child, who entered, followed by the slower steps of the grand-father; both bore heavy loads of wood upon their backs. They soon disposed of their "packs," then removing their wet clothing, and rolling themselves in dry blankets, sat down to the evening meal of dried and roasted fish, followed by a sort of thick pancake, in which all shared. The meal was brightened by the merry prattle of the grand-child, telling of the day's work in the woods, and how many had carried wood to-day; but said he, "We missed you, mother. Will you go with us tomorrow?"

"I fear my child we shall all stay home tomorrow by the sound of the storm, so I hope you have brought wood enough to last."

The evening meal finished and the fire brightened, all drew near to enjoy its genial warmth, but the old man, wearied by his day's toils, soon dropped into a heavy sleep. The child, more wakeful, drew near his grand-mother, the only mother he had ever known, for both father and mother had been drowned while he was yet a babe, leaving him the sole comfort of his aged grand-parents. As he gazed into the glowing coals, suddenly he asked: "Mother, where did the fire come from; the boys were telling me to-day one of our chiefs stole it from spirits?"

Wilt Shoon laughed a low, sweet murmur. "My child," she said, "I will tell you the story as I heard it when I was a child: Long, long ago, 'tis said the Indians indeed had no fire, but never having had it they did not know its comforts.—Bill Wil-son-in-neat, a great chief who they say first came into the world a woman, became a chieftain, died, was born again a man-child, and was at that time the greatest chief of our nation, and had also communication with spirits; told our people of the spirits who held the fire, and told what a blessing it was. The people talked it over, and after a time delegated certain witch doctors to get some fire. But the doctors failed to get the fire, and said the spirits told them Indians could not manage fire. It was a great destroyer and source of evil, and would prove a curse to Indians. Wil-son-in-neat said it was not evil, but was good, and if the doctors could not get it, he would. So leaving the village he wandered far away to where the spirits dwelt. He brought them great presents, but they would not take his presents; they told him he was false and had not the power his people believed he had, and they would prove it by sending him back without the fire he boasted he would take. The poor chief felt very sick hearted. He feared to return to his people for well he knew

they would laugh at him, so he wandered, wondering what to do, when lifting his eyes he saw in the distance a herd of reindeer. "Ah!" said he, "I will get it yet." Changing himself to the form of a deer he went back to one of the spirits' houses and began dancing. He danced so well and made the spirits so happy that some one told the chief spirit about this deer who danced so nicely. So the chief sent for the deer to come dance in his house—all the fire was in the chief's house. The deer said he would go, but said he, "my tail is sore, will you rub a little gum on the end of it." They did this for him, then he went and danced for the chief, who was very much pleased and laughed very hard at the deer's funny dancing. The fire was in the centre of the room, nearer and nearer danced the deer. All were so amused they did not notice this till he had danced right up to the fire and put his tail in, which, in a moment was all in a blaze, out he rushed before they could catch him, and as he rushed through the woods he switched his tail against the trees. In every tree he touched, he left fire. By the time he reached his native village the fire in the tail was dead and the tail was all burned off, and to make us remember that deed, the deer has never since had a tail. The chief changing back to his own form, came to the village, called his men, who followed him to the woods, felling one of the trees the fire had switched, and taking two sticks from it. The Indians rubbed them together and lo, a fire sprung up, then from this fire could they light other sticks, so this tree was divided among the people, which served as matches. From time to time, as was needed, the fire trees were cut down for the people, and by rubbing together the sticks of this wood their fire was lighted. So the Indians got the fire. It was not till the white men came that we got the little sticks to light our fires with, which they call matches."

"But, mother, where do the spirits live who kept the fire?"

"Ah! my child, this is only a story our fathers used to tell, but they believed it true and so did I for years, until I heard about the great God and His son Jesus, and even yet our old witch doctors try to make us think it true, as well as their power with spirits. But, 'tis vain, long did they hold the spell of darkness over us, and we knew not the love and light which the name of Jesus brings us. Thank God, my child, you were not born in those times, not till they were passed and the missionary here, who has come to teach us and lead us. Mark well his teaching, and remember his words, for they are wise." And now, as the old man roused from his sleep, the fire was replenished, the evening prayer was said, and soon the weary limbs were resting on the lowly pallets. Silence reigned, for slumber had closed the eyelids of the inmates.

S. H.