

8. THE CLOUD WOMAN.

Two brothers, with their mother, went up the mountains to hunt marmots. They built a lodge, and the younger brother and the mother stayed at home while the elder one went into a neighboring valley to hunt. While the younger brother was very successful, the elder one was almost starving. One day, however, a cloud came to his lodge and married him. From that time on he caught great numbers of marmots. After some time he went to visit his mother. He brought her two marmots. It was clear weather, and his mother noticed with surprise that at the time of his arrival he was quite wet. On the following morning he again departed, and stayed away for a long time, so that his mother and brother began to worry about him. Finally his younger brother started to look for him. He crossed the mountain, and reached a beautiful valley. At some distance he discovered a lodge. He thought: "This must be my brother's lodge," and went down to it. When he had reached it he entered, but did not see a soul. The lodge was built of bark. It was full of meat. Now he heard somebody laughing and speaking, but he did not understand what was said. He looked around everywhere, but he did not see any one. Finally he discovered a small cloud of mist which was moving about in the house. He entered and sat down. He saw the mist moving towards a small basket, which was then taken to a large basket and filled with berries. Then the mist moved to a spit, which was lying near the fire. It was lifted, covered with a slice of meat, and put close to the fire. When the meat was done, the mist enveloped a dish and a knife, and moved to the spit. Then the meat was put into the dish, and the mist carried it to the young man, who began to eat. When he had finished, the mist brought a basket filled with water, and the young man drank. Next came a dish filled with salmon berries mixed with bear grease. The mist enveloped a spoon, which began to stir the mixture, and then stayed in front of the young man. While he was still eating, his elder brother entered the lodge. Again he heard the laughing of women. The young man said: "Both mother and myself thought you were dead, and I came to search for you." Then the mist gave to the elder brother a basket filled with berries, and left the house. It reappeared, carrying a basket filled with water. It took up the elder brother's pouch. It opened, and marmots fell out of it. Then the mist lay over the marmots, and the young man saw that they were being skinned and dressed. Soon the mist left the lodge, carrying the skins. The elder brother spoke: "That cloud of mist is my wife. Do not ever mention the word 'cloud' in her presence, else she will leave me."