

ABBY ALGER

IN INDIAN
TENTS

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In Indian Tents / Stories Told By Penobscot, Passamaquoddy and Micmac

Indians / to Abby L. Alger:

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Abby Langdon Alger
In Indian Tents / Stories
Told By Penobscot,
Passamaquoddy and Micmac
Indians / to Abby L. Alger

PREFACE

In the summer of 1882 and 1883, I was associated with Charles G. Leland in the collection of the material for his book "The Algonquin Legends of New England," published by Houghton and Mifflin in 1884.

I found the work so delightful, that I have gone on with it since, whenever I found myself in the neighborhood of Indians. The supply of legends and tales seems to be endless, one supplementing and completing another, so that there may be a dozen versions of one tale, each containing something new. I have tried, in this little book, in every case, to bring these various versions into a single whole; though I scarcely hope to give my readers the pleasure which I found in hearing them from the Indian story-tellers. Only the very old men and women remember

these stories now; and though they know that their legends will soon be buried with them, and forgotten, it is no easy task to induce them to repeat them. One may make half-a-dozen visits, tell his own best stories, and exert all his arts of persuasion in vain, then stroll hopelessly by some day, to be called in to hear some marvellous bit of folk-lore. These old people have firm faith in the witches, fairies, and giants of whom they tell; and any trace of amusement or incredulity would meet with quick indignation and reserve.

Two of these stories have been printed in Appleton's "Popular Science Monthly," and are in the English Magazine "Folk-Lore."

I am under the deepest obligation to my friend, Mrs. Wallace Brown, of Calais, Maine, who has generously contributed a number of stories from her own collection.

The woman whose likeness appears on the cover of this book was a famous story-teller, one of the few nearly pure-blooded Indians in the Passamaquoddy tribe. She was over eighty-seven when this picture was taken.

THE CREATION

In the beginning God made Adam out of the earth, but he did not make Glūs-kābé (the Indian God). Glūs-kābé made himself out of the dirt that was kicked up in the creation of Adam. He rose and walked about, but he could not speak until the Lord opened his lips.

God made the earth and the sea, and then he took counsel with Glūs-kābé concerning them. He asked him if it would be better to have the rivers run up on one side of the earth and down on the other, but Glūs-kābé said, “No, they must all run down one way.”

Then the Lord asked him about the ocean, whether it would do to have it always lie still. Glūs-kābé told him, “No!” It must rise and fall, or else it would grow thick and stagnant.

“How about fire?” asked the Lord; “can it burn all the time and nobody put it out?”

Glūs-kābé said: “That would not do, for if anybody got burned and fire could not be put out, they would die; but if it could be put out, then the burn would get well.”

So he answered all the Lord’s questions.

After this, Glūs-kābé was out on the ocean one day, and the wind blew so hard he could not manage his canoe. He had to go back to land, and he asked his old grandmother (among Indians this title is often only a mark of respect, and does not always indicate any blood relationship), “Māli Moninkwess” (the

Woodchuck), what he could do. She told him to follow a certain road up a mountain. There he found an old man sitting on a rock flapping his wings (arms) violently. This was "Wūchowsen," the great Wind-blower. He begged Glūs-kābé to take him up higher, where he would have space to flap his wings still harder. So Glūs-kābé lifted him up and carried him a long way. When they were over a great lake, he let Wūchowsen drop into the water. In falling he broke his wings, and lay there helpless.

Glūs-kābé went back to sea and found the ocean as smooth as glass. He enjoyed himself greatly for many days, paddling about; but finally the water grew stagnant and thick, and a great smell arose. The fish died, and Glūs-kābé could bear it no longer.

Again he consulted his grandmother, and she told him that he must set Wūchowsen free. So he once more bore Wūchowsen back to his mountain, first making him promise not to flap his wings so constantly, but only now and then, so that the Indians might go out in their canoes. Upon his consent to do this, Glūs-kābé mended his broken wings; but they were never quite so strong as at first, and thus we do not now have such terrible winds as in the olden days.

This story was told to me by an old man whom I had always thought dull and almost in his dotage; but one day, after I had told him some Indian legends, his whole face changed, he threw back his head, closed his eyes, and without the slightest warning or preliminary began to relate, almost to chant, this myth in a most extraordinary way, which so startled me that I could not at

the time take any notes of it, and was obliged to have it repeated later. The account of Wūchowsen was added to show the wisdom of Glūs-kābé's advice in the earlier part of the tale, and is found among many tribes.

GRANDFATHER THUNDER

During the summer of 1892, at York Harbor, Maine, I was in daily communication with a party of Penobscot Indians from Oldtown, among whom were an old man and woman, from whom I got many curious legends. The day after a terrible thunderstorm I asked the old woman how they had weathered it in their tents. She looked searchingly at me and said, "It was good." After a moment she added, "You know the thunder is our grandfather?" I answered that I did not know it, and was startled when she continued: "Yes, when we hear the first roll of the thunder, especially the first thunder in the spring, we always go out into the open air, build a fire, put a little tobacco on it, and give grandfather a smoke. Ever since I can remember, my father and my grandfather did this, and I shall always do it as long as I live. I'll tell you the story of it and why we do so.

"Long time ago there were two Indian families living in a very lonely place. This was before there were any white people in the land. They lived far apart. Each family had a daughter, and these girls were great friends. One sultry afternoon in the late spring, one of them told her mother she wanted to go to see her friend. The mother said: 'No, it is not right for you to go alone, such a handsome girl as you; you must wait till your father or your brother are here to go with you.' But the girl insisted, and at last her mother yielded and let her go. She had not gone far when she

met a tall, handsome young man, who spoke to her. He joined her, and his words were so sweet that she noticed nothing and knew not which way she went until at last she looked up and found herself in a strange place where she had never been before. In front of her was a great hole in the face of a rock. The young man told her that this was his home, and invited her to enter. She refused, but he urged until she said that if he would go first, she would follow after. He entered, but when she looked after him she saw that he was changed to a fearful, 'Wī-will-mecq' – a loathly worm. She shrieked, and turned to run away; but at that instant a loud clap of thunder was heard, and she knew no more until she opened her eyes in a vast room, where sat an old man watching her. When he saw that she had awaked, he said, 'I am your grandfather Thunder, and I have saved you.' Leading her to the door, he showed her the Wī-will-mecq, dead as a log, and chopped into small bits like kindling wood. The old man had three sons, one named 'M'desson.' He is the baby, and is very fierce and cruel. It is he who slays men and beasts and destroys property. The other two are kind and gentle; they cool the hot air, revive the parched fields and the crops, and destroy only that which is harmful to the earth. When you hear low, distant mutterings, that is the old man. He told the girl that as often as spring returned she must think of him, and show that she was grateful by giving him a little smoke. He then took leave of her and sent her home, where her family had mourned her as one dead. Since then no Indian has ever feared thunder." I said, "But

how about the lightning?" "Oh," said the old woman, "lightning is grandfather's wife."

Later in the summer, at Jackson, in the White Mountains, I met Louis Mitchell, for many years the Indian member of the Maine Legislature, a Passamaquoddy, and asked him about this story. He said it was perfectly true, although the custom was now falling into disuse; only the old people kept it up. The tobacco is cast upon the fire in a ring, and draws the electricity, which plays above it in a beautiful blue circle of flickering flames. He added that it is a well-known fact that no Indian and no Indian property were ever injured by lightning.

THE FIGHT OF THE WITCHES

Many, many long years ago, there lived in a vast cave in the interior of a great mountain, an old man who was a “Kiāwākq’ m’téoulin,” or Giant Witch.

Near the mountain was a big Indian village, whose chief was named “Hassagwākq’,” or the Striped Squirrel. Every few days some of his best warriors disappeared mysteriously from the tribe, until Hassagwākq at last became convinced that they were killed by the Giant Witch. He therefore called a council of all the most mighty magicians among his followers, who gathered together in a new strong wigwam made for the occasion. There were ten of them in all, and their names were as follows: “Quābīt,” the Beaver; “Moskwe,” the Wood Worm; “Quāgsis,” the Fox; “K’tchī Atōsis,” the Big Snake; “Āgwem,” the Loon; “Kosq,” the Heron; “Mūin,” the Bear; “Lox,” the Indian Devil; “K’tchīplāgan,” the Eagle; and “Wābe-kèloch,” the Wild Goose.

The great chief Hassagwākq’ addressed the sorcerers, and told them that he hoped they might be able to conquer the Giant Witch, and that they must do so at once if possible, or else their tribe would be exterminated. The sorcerers resolved to begin the battle the very next night, and promised to put forth their utmost power to destroy the enemy.

But the Giant Witch could foretell all his troubles by his dreams, and that selfsame night he dreamed of all the plans which

the followers of Striped Squirrel had formed for his ruin.

Now all Indian witches have one or more "poohegans," or guardian spirits, and the Giant Witch at once despatched one of his poohegans, little "Alūmūset," the Humming-bird, to the chief Hassagwāq' to say that it was not fair to send ten men to fight one; but if he would send one magician at a time, he would be pleased to meet them.

The chief replied that the witches should meet him in battle one by one; and the next night they gathered together at an appointed place as soon as the sun slept, and agreed that Beaver should be the first to fight.

The Beaver had "Sogalūn," or Rain, for his guardian spirit, and he caused a great flood to fall and fill up the cave of the Giant Witch, hoping thus to drown him. But Giant Witch had the power to change himself into a "Seguap Squ Hm," or Lamprey Eel, and in this shape he clung to the side of his cave and so escaped. Beaver, thinking that the foe was drowned, swam into the cave, and was caught in a "K'pagūtīhīgan," or beaver trap, which Giant Witch had purposely set for him. Thus perished Beaver, the first magician.

Next to try his strength was Moskwe, the Wood Worm, whose poohegan is "Fire." Wood Worm told Fire that he would bore a hole into the cave that night, and bade him enter next day and burn up the foe. He set to work, and with his sharp head, by wriggling and winding himself like a screw, he soon made a deep hole in the mountain side. But Giant Witch knew very well what

was going on, and he sent Humming-bird with a piece of “chū-gāga-sīq’,” or punk, to plug up the hole, which he did so well that Wood Worm could not make his way back to the open air, and when Fire came to execute his orders, the punk blazed up and destroyed Moskwe, the Wood Worm. Thus perished the second sorcerer.

Next to fight was K’tchi Atōsis, the Big Snake, who had “Amwess,” the Bee, for a protector. The Bee summoned all his winged followers, and they flew into the cave in a body, swarming all over Giant Witch and stinging him till he roared with pain; but he sent Humming-bird to gather a quantity of birch bark, which he set on fire, making a dense smoke which stifled all the bees.

After waiting some time, Big Snake entered the cave to see if the bees had slain the enemy; but he was speedily caught in a dead fall which the Witch had prepared for him, and thus perished the third warrior.

The great chief, Hassagwāq’, was sore distressed at losing three of his mightiest men without accomplishing anything, but still, seven yet remained.

Next came Quāgsis, the Fox, whose poohegan was “K’sī-nochka,” or “Disease,” and he commanded to afflict the foe with all manner of evils. The Witch was soon covered with boils and sores, and every part of his body was filled with aches and pains. But he despatched his guardian spirit, the Humming-bird, to “Quiliphirt,” the God of medicine, who gave him the plant

“Kī Kay īn-bīsun,”¹ and as soon as it was administered, every ill departed.

The next to enter the lists was Āgwem, the Loon, whose poohegan was “K’taiūk,” or Cold. Soon the mountain was covered with snow and ice, the cave was filled with cold blasts of wind, frosts split the trees and cracked asunder the huge rocks. The Giant Witch suffered horribly, but did not yield. He produced his magic stone and heated it red-hot, still, so intense was the cold that it had no power to help him.

Alūmūset’s wings were frozen, and he could not fly on any more errands; but another of the master’s attendant spirits, “Litūswāgan,” or Thought, went like a flash to “Sūwessen,” the South Wind, and begged his aid.

The warm South Wind began to blow about the mountain, and Cold was driven from the scene.

Next to try his fate was Kosq, the Heron, whose guardian spirit was “Chenoo,” the giant with the heart of ice, who quickly went to work with his big stone hatchet, chopped down trees, tore up rocks, and began to hew a vast hole in the side of the mountain; but the Giant Witch now for the first time let loose his terrible

¹ This plant is much used by an Indian tribe in Lower California who are said to live to a great age, one hundred and eighty years being no uncommon term of life with them. It is not now known to exist among the Eastern Indians. It grew like maize, about two feet high, and was always in motion, even when boiling in the pot. Louis Mitchell’s mother, whom I knew well, received it from an Indian who wished to marry, and to whom she gave in return enough goods to set up housekeeping. She divided it with her four sisters, but at their death no trace of it was found. It gave him who drank it great length of life.

dog “M’dässmüss,” who barked so loudly and attacked Chenoo so savagely that he was driven thence in alarm.

The next warrior was Mūin, the Bear, whose poohegans were “Petāgūn,” or Thunder, and “Pessāquessūk,” or Lightning. Soon a tremendous thunderstorm arose which shook the whole mountain, and a thunder-bolt split the mouth of the cave in twain; the lightning flashed into the cavern and nearly blinded the Giant Witch, who now for the first time knew what it was to fear. He yelled aloud with pain, for he was fearfully burned by the lightning. Thunder and Lightning redoubled their fury, and filled the place with fire, much alarming the foe, who hurriedly bade Humming-bird summon “Haplebembo,” the big bull-frog, to his aid. Bull-frog appeared, and spat out his huge mouth full of water, which nearly filled the cave, quenching the fire, and driving away Thunder and Lightning.

Next to fight was Lox, the Indian Devil. Now Lox was always a coward, and having heard of the misfortunes of his friends, he cut off one of his big toes, and when Striped Squirrel called him to begin the battle, he excused himself, saying that he was lame and could not move.

Next in order came K’tchīplāgan, the Eagle, whose poohegan was “Aplāsūmbressit,” the Whirlwind. When he entered the enemy’s abode in all his fury and frenzy of noise, the Giant Witch awoke from sleep, and instantly “K’plāmūsūke” lost his breath and was unable to speak; he signed to Humming-bird to go for “Culloo,” the lord of all great birds; but the Whirlwind was so

strong that the Humming-bird could not get out of the cave, being beaten back again and again. Therefore the Giant Witch bade Thought summon Culloo. In an instant the great bird was at his side, and made such a strong wind with his wings at the mouth of the cave that the power of the Whirlwind was destroyed.

Hassagwākq' now began to despair, for but one witch remained to him, and that was Wābe-kèloch, the Wild Goose, who was very quiet, though a clever fellow, never quarrelling with any one, and not regarded as a powerful warrior. But the great chief had a dream in which he saw a monstrous giant standing at the mouth of the enemy's cave. He was so tall that he reached from the earth to the sky, and he said that all that was needful in order to destroy the foe was to let some young woman entice him out of his lair, when he would at once lose his magic power and might readily be slain.

The chief repeated this dream to Wābe-kèloch, ordering him to obey these wise words. Wild Goose's poohegan was "Mikūmwess," the Indian Puck, a fairy elf, who speedily took the shape of a beautiful girl and went to the mouth of the cave, where he climbed into a tall hemlock-tree, singing this song as he mounted:

“Come hither, young man,
Come list to my song,
Come forth this lovely night,
Come forth, for the moon shines bright,
Come, see the leaves so red,

Come, breathe the air so pure.”

Giant Witch heard the voice, and coming to the mouth of the cave, he was so charmed by the music that he stepped out and saw a most lovely girl sitting among the branches of a tree. She called to him: “*W'litt hoddm'n, natchī pen eqūlin w'liketnqu' hēmus,*” – “Please, kind old man, help me down from this tree.” As soon as he approached her, Glūs-kābé, the great king of men, sprang from behind the tree, threw his “timhēgan,” his stone hatchet, at him and split his head open. Then addressing him, Glūs-kābé said: “You have been a wicked witch, and have destroyed many of Chief Hassagwākq's best warriors. Now speak yet once again and tell where you have laid the bones of your victims.” Giant Witch replied that in the hollow of the mountain rested a vast heap of human bones, all that remained of what were once the mightiest men of Striped Squirrel's tribe.

He then being dead, Glūs-kābé commanded all the birds of the air and the beasts of the forest to assemble and devour the body of Giant Witch.

This being done, Glūs-kābé ordered the beasts to go into the cave and bring forth the bones of the dead warriors, which they did. He next bade the birds take each a bone in his beak and pile them together at the village of Hassagwākq'.

He then directed that chief to build a high wall of great stones around the heap of bones, to cover them with wood, and make ready “eqūnāk'n,” or a hot bath.

Then Glūs-kābé set the wood on fire and began to sing his magic song; soon he bade the people heap more wood upon the fire, and pour water on the steaming stones. He sang louder and louder, faster and faster, until his voice shook the whole village; and he ordered the people to stop their ears lest the strength of his voice should kill them. Then he redoubled his singing, and the bones began to move with the heat, and to sizzle and smoke and give forth a strange sound. Then Glūs-kābé sang his resurrection song in a low tone; at last the bones began to chant with him; he threw on more water, and the bones came together in their natural order and became living human beings once more.

The people were amazed with astonishment at Glūs-kābé's might; and the great Chief Hassagwāq' gathered together all the neighboring tribes and celebrated the marvellous event with the resurrection feast, which lasted many days, and the tribe of Striped Squirrel was never troubled by evil witches forever afterward.

ŪLISKE ²

I was sitting on the beach one afternoon with old Louisa Flansouay (François) and the other Indians, when she suddenly rose with an air of great determination, saying to me, "Come into camp and I tell you a story!" (No story can ever be told in the open air; if the narrator be not under cover, evil spirits may easily take possession of her.)

I gladly followed old Louisa, who is a noted story-teller, and heard the following brief but thrilling tale.

Many, many years ago a great chief had an only daughter who was so handsome that she was always known by the name of "Ūliske," which is to say "Beauty." All the young men of the tribe sought her hand in marriage, but she would have nothing to say to them. Her father vainly implored her to make a choice; but she only answered him, "No husband whom I could take, would ever be any good to me."

Every year at a certain season, she wandered off by herself and was gone for many days; where she went no one could discover, nor could she be restrained when the appointed time came round.

At last, however, she yielded to persuasion and took a husband. For a time all went well. When the season for her absence was at hand, she told her husband that she must go. He

² C. G. Leland gives a similar story in his "Algonquin Legends of New England."

said he would go with her, and as she made no objection, they set out on the following morning and travelled until they came to a lovely, lonely lake. A point of land ran out into the water, well wooded and provided with a pleasant wigwam. Here Ūliske beached the canoe; they went ashore and remained for two days and nights, when the husband disappeared. Ūliske in due time returned to her tribe and reported his loss. Her father and his followers sought long and anxiously, but no trace of him was ever found. Later on, Ūliske took a second husband, a third and a fourth, always quietly yielding to persuasion, and always saying as at first, that no husband whom she took could ever be any good to her. One after the other visited with her the peninsula in the lake and disappeared in the same sudden and mysterious way.

The fifth husband was known as “Ū-el-ŭm-bek,” “the handsome, the brave,” and he made up his mind to solve the strange riddle of his predecessors. When he and Ūliske reached the peninsula, he said that, while she got supper, he would keep on in the canoe and see what fish or game he could find. He went but a little way, then drew the canoe up among the bushes and searched in every direction till he found a well beaten foot-path. “Now I shall know all,” he said, and hid himself behind a tree. Soon Ūliske came from the wigwam and went down to the water. Undressing herself, and letting down her long black hair, she began to beat upon the water with a stick and to sing an ancient Indian song. As she sang, the water began to heave and boil, and coil after coil slowly uprose above the surface a huge

Wi-will-mekq', a loathly worm, its great horns as red as fire. It swam ashore and clasped Ūliske in its scaly folds, wrapping her from head to foot, while she caressed it with a look of delight. Then Ū-el-ŭm-bek knew all. The Wi-willmekq' had cast a spell upon Ūliske so that to her it appeared in the likeness of a beautiful young hero. The worm had destroyed her four husbands, and, had he not been prudent, would have drowned him as well. Waiting until Ūliske was alone, he returned to the wigwam before she had had time to wash off the slimy traces of Wi-will-mekq's embraces, and charged her with her infatuation. Giving her no time to answer, he hurriedly chewed a magic root with which he had provided himself, flung it into the lake, thus preventing any attack as he crossed the water, got into the canoe and paddled away, leaving Ūliske to her fate, well knowing that as she had failed to supply her loathly lover with a fresh victim, she must herself become the prey of his keen appetite.

Rejoining his tribe, he frankly told his story. Even the chief declared that he had done well, and of Ūliske nothing more was ever heard.

STORY OF WĀLŪT

In old times there were many witches among the Indians. Indeed, almost every one was more or less of a magician or sorcerer, and it was only a question as to whose power was the strongest.

In the days of which I speak, one family had been almost exterminated by the spells of a famous m'tēūlin, and only one old woman named "M'déw't'len," the Loon, and her infant grandson were left alive; and she, fearing lest they should meet with the same fate, strapped the baby on her back upon a board bound to her forehead, as was the ancient way, and set forth into the wilderness. At night she halted, built a wigwam of boughs and bark, and lay down, lost in sad thoughts of the future; for there was no brave now to hunt and fish for her, and she must needs starve and the baby too. As she mourned her desolate state, a voice said in her ear: "You have a man, a brave man, Wālūt,³ the mighty warrior; and all shall be well if you will take the beaver skin from your old 't'bān-kāgan,⁴ spread it on the floor, and place the baby on it." This she did, and then fell peacefully asleep. When she waked, she saw, standing in the middle of the skin, a tall man. At first, she was terrified; but the stranger said,

³ Magician.

⁴ A pack kettle made of birch bark, used by the Indian before the days of trunks. I have a toy one a hundred years old or more.

“Fear not, ‘Nochgemiss,’⁵ it is only I!” and truly, as she gazed, she recognized the features of the baby whom she had laid upon the beaver fur, so few hours before. Even before day dawned, he had brought in a huge bear, skinned and dressed it. All day he came and went, bringing fish and game, great and small, and the old woman was glad.

Next morning, the skin which hung at the door of the wigwam was raised, and a girl looked in and smiled at Wālūt. His grandmother said, “Follow her not, for she is a witch, and would destroy you.” The next day and the next and so on, for five days, the same thing was repeated; but on the sixth day, the girl not only lifted the curtain, but she entered in, went straight to Wālūt’s sleeping place and began to arrange his bed. This done, she drew from her bosom “nokoksis,” tiny brass kettles, and proceeded to cook a meal, – soup, corn and meat, – all in perfect silence. Grandmother watched her, but said nothing. When the meal was cooked, the girl set a birch-bark dish before grandmother and Wālūt, and began to ladle out the soup. Although the kettle was so small that it seemed no bigger than a child’s toy, both the dishes were filled and plenty then remained. No word was said; but when night came, the girl lay down beside Wālūt and thus, by ancient Indian law, became his wife. Their happy life, however, was of short duration, for the girl’s mother, “Tomāquè,” the Beaver, was a mighty magician, and was angry because her daughter had married without her consent. She therefore stole

⁵ Grandmother.

her away and deprived her of all memory of her husband and the past. Wālūt was determined to recover his bride, and his grandmother, wishing to help him, took from the old bark kettle a miniature bow and arrows. These she stretched and stretched until they became of heroic size. She strung the bow with a strand of her own hair, and gave it to her grandson, telling him that no arrow shot from that bow could ever miss its mark. She also dressed him from head to foot in the garb of an ancient warrior, formerly the property of his grandfather, as was the bow. She told him that he had a long, hard road to go, and many trials to overcome; but he was not afraid. All day he travelled, and, at night fall, came to a wigwam in which lived an old man. Wālūt asked him where Tomāquè might be found. The old man answered: "I cannot tell you, my child. You must ask my brother who lives farther on. He is much older than I, and he may know. To-night you can rest here, if you can put up with the hardships of my wigwam." Wālūt accepted this offer, and the old man began to heap great stones on the fire. It grew hotter and hotter, and Wālūt thought his last hour had come; but he said to himself, "I can suffer," and he piled more stones on the fire, and built a wall of them about the wigwam, so that it grew hotter than ever, and the old man said, "Let me out, let me out, I am too hot!" But Wālūt said, "I am cold, I am cold!" and so he conquered the first magician.

Next night he came to the home of the second brother, who made the same answer to his inquiries as the first, and also

offered him a night's shelter if he could bear the hardships of the wigwam. No sooner had Wālūt accepted his offer, than he sat down and bade his guest pick the insects from his head and destroy them, after the old custom, by cracking them between his teeth. Now these insects were venomous toads which would blister Wālūt's lips and poison his blood. Luckily he had a handful of cranberries in his pocket, and for every toad, he bit a cranberry.⁶ The old man was completely deceived, and when he thought that his guest had imbibed enough poison to destroy him, he bade him desist from his task. Thus Wālūt passed successfully through the second trial. On the third day he journeyed until he came to the abode of the third brother, oldest of all, seemingly just tottering on the brink of the grave. Wālūt again asked for Tomāquè, and the old man answered: "To-morrow, I will tell you. Rest here to-night, if you can bear the hardships of my home." As they sat by the fire the old man began to rub his knee, and instantly flames of fire darted from every side; but Wālūt was on his guard, and uttered a spell which drew the old man slowly, but surely, into the fire which he had created, and he perished. "Rub your knee, old man," cried Wālūt, "rub your knee until you are tired!"

Next morning as he drew the curtain, boom, boom, a noise like thunder fell upon his ear. It was the drumming of a giant partridge. Wālūt fitted an arrow to his bow and shot the bird to the heart, well knowing that it was his wife's sister "Kākāgūs,"

⁶ This incident occurs in several tales.

the Crow, who had come to capture him. Towards evening he reached a great mountain towering above a quiet lake. As he looked, he saw upon the summit, his wife, embroidering a garment with porcupine quills, for this was where she lived with her mother. Catching sight of him, she plunged at once into the centre of the mountain, having no memory of her husband. He, however, hid himself, feeling sure that she would come forth again, and being determined to seize her before she could again disappear. Soon indeed he saw her and tried to grasp her, but only caught at her long hair. Instantly, she drew her knife, cut off her hair, and vanished into the mountain, where her mother loudly reprimanded her, saying, "I told you never to go outside; you see now that I was right. Nothing remains but for you to go in search of your hair." Next day, therefore, the girl set forth, and on reaching the wigwam of the second old man, her grandfather, for all of the old men were of her kin, the veil was lifted and she knew that it was her husband who had sought her and stolen her hair. She at once rejoined him; he restored her long locks, and, by his magic power, they again grew upon her head and for a year all went well. At the end of that time she became the mother of a boy, whom she called "Kīūny" the Otter. Soon all the game and fish disappeared. Wālūt went out every day, searching the woods and waters for many miles around; but, night after night, he came home empty-handed, and starvation seemed very near at hand. Then Nochgemiss, the Grandmother, warned them that Tomāquè was bent on revenge, and bade Wālūt go forth and

slay her. She armed him with a bone spear from the old pack kettle, and he travelled to the mountain. It was mid-winter and the lake was covered with clear ice. Deep down beneath the ice a giant beaver swam to and fro, no other than Tomāquè herself. Vainly Wālūt plunged his spear into the depths. Again and again she evaded him, until, in a fury, he cried, “Your life or mine!” and at last succeeded in striking her; but so powerful was she that she raised him into the air, using the spear in his hand as a lever, the other end being deep in her side. The result seemed doubtful; but grandmother, who knew all that was passing, flew to her boy’s aid and, in the shape of a huge snake, Atōsis, wound herself about Tomāquè, fold upon fold, and at last conquered the foe and crushed her to death, Wālūt dealing the final stroke.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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