

NEBRASKA FOLKLORE PAMPHLETS

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SANTEE-SIOUX INDIAN LEGENDS

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These eight Santee-Sioux Indian legends have been collected from the files of the Word Carrier--a missionary paper published by the Santee Mission School. They appeared between the years of 1883 and 1887, when the paper had a circulation of less than 300 copies.

"The Two Hunters," "The Orphan Boy," "The Fox," and "Canktewin--the Ill-Fated Woman," were translated by Miss Julia LaFramboise, a teacher and missionary in the Santee Normal Training School. "The Spider and the Ducks" was translated by Peter Hunter. The translations of "The Rabbit," "The Beaver," and "The Hunter" are anonymous.

As published in the Santee missionary paper, the translations were very rough and made no attempt at literary style. Consequently, they have been subject to considerable editing to clarify their meaning, although every attempt has been made to retain the simple, almost childlike style of the Santee-Sioux original.

Like most Indian legends, these have lost a great deal of their original charm and interest in translation and in print. So much of their effect depends upon the gestures of the story-teller and their natural setting.

Certain references to large bodies of water not found in Nebraska, such as the sea mentioned in the "Orphan Boy," relate to the lakes of Minnesota, where the tribe originated. The Santee were moved to South Dakota and lived there until April, 1866, when (on account of the barrenness of their location) they were moved to their present domain in Knox County, in northeastern Nebraska, on the bank of the Missouri River.

THE SPIDER AND THE DUCKS

translated by Peter Hunter

The Spider [Santee name for evil spirit] was searching for food on the plains when he came to the base of a hill. Thinking to find food at its top, he laboriously climbed one of its steep sides. When he reached his destination, he saw before him a large lake which stretched from the base of the hill into the distance as far as the eye could see. Many ducks were floating on its shiny surface. The Spider, becoming ravenously hungry at the sight of water fowl, began to scheme how he could get

some of them to eat. Finally, after some minutes of thought, a plan came to him. He descended to the base of the hill, where he had started, and gathered a bundle of hay which he carried to the hilltop.

This time, he stood erect on the hilltop so that all the ducks could see him; one of them said, "Hello, old Spider, what do you carry on your back?" "Songs," replied the Spider. To this remark, they all answered, "You had better come down and sing to us." The Spider immediately accepted their invitation and descended to the lake shore near the ducks, where he proceeded to fashion a lodge from the hay he was carrying. When he had finished the lodge, he invited the ducks to come in and sit down. It took a long time for the ducks to get in because there were so many of them.

When all of the ducks were seated, the Spider closed the door and told them to shut their eyes. Then he began to sing:

"Whoever opens his eyes
Must have red eyes, red eyes,
Whoever opens his eyes
Must have red eyes, red eyes,
Whoever opens his eyes must have red eyes."

The ducks liked the song and began dancing to its tune. The Spider kept on singing; at the same time, he went from one duck to another and twisted off its neck, until the necks of half the ducks in the lodge had been twisted off. Then he came to a swan, who had been visiting the ducks on the lake and had followed his companions into the lodge to hear the Spider sing, and attempted to twist his head off. But the swan's neck was too long and strong for the Spider to break it off. So the swan, who was badly frightened, said, "Quack! Quack!" One of the young ducks, upon hearing this warning, opened his eyes and at once saw many dead ducks in the lodge. He cried out in alarm: "Open your eyes, all of you, the Spider has killed almost the entire flock!" All of the remaining ducks opened their eyes when they heard what had happened to their companions. Their eyes immediately became red, as the Spider said they would. This is the reason why ducks, to this day, always have red eyes.

THE FOX

Translated by Julia LaFramboise

Part I

A fox, who had spent many days searching for something to eat, was on the point of starvation when he came to a large tent of buffalo skins. Although at first afraid to venture into the tent, in which he could hear two men were talking, his hunger finally compelled him to do so. The first thing he saw, after he had entered, was a pot of venison cooking over a fire. On either side of the fire sat two old blind men; they were discussing old times while waiting for their meat to be cooked. The fox, perceiving that they were blind, grew bolder and, seeing a rib sticking out of the pot, slyly took it out and picked off the meat. Then he took another and still another, until nothing was left but a pile of bare rib bones. These he replaced in the pot.

At last one of the blind men said, "Well, I think this meat must be done." He removed the pot from the fire but found it contained nothing but bones. He then said to the other old man, "You artful, good-for-nothing fellow! You thought to cheat me out of my dinner." The other man, in great surprise at the accusation of his companion, became enraged. Each accused the other of being the guilty one, in loud and angry tones. The fox, meanwhile, took up a stick and, going very stealthily up to one of them, struck him with it. The blind man at once turned and accused the other man of striking him. The fox then struck the other man. Both blind men thereupon flew at each other in great wrath, which so excited the fox that he giggled. The blind man ceased fighting and enquired who had come. The fox, smoothing his face, answered, "A traveler."

The old men, very much ashamed of their quarrel with each other, resumed their respective places and welcomed the stranger. They told him to partake of the dried buffalo meat which was packed away in skins in great piles around the tent. The fox accepted their invitation and ate until he could eat no more. Then said the old man, "If you are without provisions for the way, take one of the sacks of buffalo meat." So the fox selected the largest and went on his way rejoicing. The meat was so good, however, that he stopped every little while to eat. Very soon, he had nothing left but the skin in which the meat was packed; this he rationed out so it would last for two days. When the last mouthful of this was gone, he was famished as ever.

One day, when he thought he would die of hunger, he saw a fat buffalo feeding on the green grass. The fox immediately hid in the tall grass and was trying to devise some way of killing the buffalo when the animal looked up and saw him. He said, "What do you want, my young brother?" The fox came forward and answered, "Ah! my brother, you see how starved I am. Oh, that I were a buffalo so I could feed on green grass and grow fat like you!" The buffalo, hearing this wish, replied, "Would you indeed be a buffalo if you could? Since you would be, you shall. Do you see yonder knoll? Go and sit upright on it, and I will come up the hill and jump over you." The fox obeyed the buffalo and took his position. The buffalo, with staring eyes and foaming mouth, came galloping up the hill, frightening the fox so much that he jumped to one side. The buffalo said, "You have now spoiled it all. You can never be a buffalo if you don't sit still and let me jump over you." The fox was very penitent and promised to sit still the next time if the buffalo would try once more. Again the fox sat on the knoll, but when he saw the buffalo coming at him so fiercely, he jumped aside a second time. The buffalo, now angry, said, "Since you are such a coward, it is best that you remain a half-starved fox." But the fox entreated him to try once more. This time the fox sat still. The buffalo, as he jumped over him, knocked him over with his hoof, causing the fox to tumble down the hill. When the fox got up from his fall, he was a buffalo. He immediately began to eat the green grass, which grew profusely in the vicinity.

Part II

The Spider [Evil Spirit] was hunting in the prairie with a quiver full of weeds and a tall weed for a bow. During his hunt, he met the buffalo, to whom he said, "Why, the last time I saw you, you were a poor hungry fox." The fox then told him how a kind buffalo had turned him into a buffalo so that he might not be hungry as long as there was grass to eat. Unktomi [the Evil Spirit] answered, "This, indeed, has been a hard year. Famine is in all the land. Turn me into a buffalo that I may not be hungry." "Well," said the good natured fox, "get up on yonder knoll and I will jump over you." Unktomi did as he was told, but when he saw the fox-buffalo running toward him he jumped aside. The fox-buffalo then said, "You will never be a buffalo if you are such a coward."

Unktomi sat down on the knoll again, and as the fox-buffalo jumped over him he hit Unktomi; but instead of turning the Spider into a buffalo, he was himself, turned back into a fox. After Unktomi had seen what had happened, he sat down and laughed immoderately while the poor fox sneaked out of sight.

THE TWO HUNTERS

Translated by Julia LaFramboise

Two hunters started out from a camp on a day when the snow was deep and game was scarce. One of them was successful in his chase, but the other hunter did not succeed in finding any game. When the fortunate man sat down on a log to rest, the other man came over to sit beside him. They smoked their pipes and talked about the events of the day. The unfortunate hunter expected, according to Indian hunters' courtesy, the successful hunter to share his game with him. But the successful hunter, after having smoked his pipe, took up his deer and walked off without further ceremony. This insult was deeply resented by the other man, who decided to have revenge. He at once resolved to kill the other hunter's daughter, as his Wakan [sacred medicines] would enable him to do so without detection, since he was a medicine man.

When he came to his tent, he opened his medicine bag and prayed to his gods to send a disease that would immediately kill the successful hunter's daughter. The prayer of hatred was answered, and the hunter's daughter died. The successful hunter, who knew his daughter had died from an unnatural death, desired to find out who had caused her death. When she was laid on a scaffold in the top of a tree (which was the way the Santee buried their dead), he lay down beside her, knowing that the man responsible for her death would come in the night to cut off the tongue of his victim. He did not have to wait long. As soon as the sun had gone down, he heard a rushing sound like that of a whirlwind. A winged man flew over him and lit beside his daughter's corpse. The father scanned the countenance of the man who was preparing to cut out his victim's tongue, and recognized the features of the slighted hunter.

As the medicine man proceeded with his terrible work, he asked the corpse: "Do you still eat of your father's venison?" Whereat the enraged father seized him, saying, "Yes, she still eats of it!" The struggle between the two powerful men was long and terrible, but when the beams of the pale moon shot out from behind a cloud the stricken father was avenged.

The father of the dead girl cut up the corpse of the medicine man and took it home, where he told his wife he had brought fresh meat for her to put in the pot. After it was put on to boil, he called all the members of the medicine fraternity to a feast. The host did not speak until after the last man was through eating and the pipe was passed around the group. Then he said: "You all know that my daughter has been killed by medicine; 'tis useless to deny it." They all answered, "Yes." Then the host went on: "My daughter's death was the work of one of your fraternity, of one of your greatest medicine men, whom I called to attend this feast and who did not come. But I caught him, and it was of him you have made such a hearty meal. I am avenged."

The medicine men all looked grave as their chief speaker stood up and said: "It was just. Since he was so bungling as to be caught he deserves his fate."

THE RABBIT

(Translator anonymous)

An old man lived with his squaw and two daughters, for whom he used to fetch wood. One day, when he was chopping wood, he heard someone whistling. Upon looking around, he saw, sitting by a distant tree, a rabbit motioning for him to come over. The rabbit, upon his approach, gave him an acorn and told him to crack it open in his stable when he went home. The old man, when he came to his stable, did as he was told. To his surprise, a wagon came out of the acorn.

The next day, when again he went after wood, he met the same rabbit who gave him another acorn. This time it contained a harnessed team of horses.

The rabbit, on the third day, gave him an acorn that was to be cracked open in the tepee. It contained a pack of full clothes for his two daughters.

The old man told his daughters on the morning after they had received their clothes, that there was a young man who had been very good to him and wanted to know which one of his daughters would marry him. They both thought they would like to. The old man went to the tree and found the rabbit and asked him to come home with him. The rabbit, now very bashful, did not want to go. So the old man picked him up, put him in the wagon and took him home by force. When they got there, he took the rabbit out, carried him into the house, and said to his daughters, "Here he is." The daughters looked at the rabbit and said they did not want him. This made the rabbit feel ashamed, so he crept under the bed. Before long, he crawled out as a young man, dressed in grey clothes. Then they both wanted to marry him. But the younger one said to the older, "You must not marry him because you hate him so." So the younger daughter and the young man were married.

After they were married, the young man cracked an acorn which caused a large tent to rise up a short distance from where the old people lived. The young couple moved into this tent, which was completely furnished. The only request the young man made of his bride was that he should not be called "Rabbit," but "Caske." She complied with his request and called him Caske, but one day she forgot and called him Rabbit. This made him so angry that he left her. She felt very badly and cried for many days.

At last, one day, she put on her finest dress, prepared some lunch, and went away. The first person she met on her journey was an old woman who lived in a grass tent. The old woman said, "Grandchild, whoever you are, come in." When she went in, the old woman took a handful of wild beans from under some hay and a few pieces of dried-out tallow, which she gave to her for her meal. After she was through eating, the old woman asked her where she was going. The girl answered, "Nowhere in particular: I am just walking around." Then the old woman said, "No, Grandchild, I know where you are going and what you are going for, but I prefer my sister to tell you."

The old woman told her where to find her sister, who lived down the road in another grass tent.

But the second old woman did as the first one had done--gave her beans and tallow to eat, asked her the same questions, and told her to go to her sister who lived still farther down the road. She visited five old women, all sisters, who lived in grass tents and gave her wild beans and tallow to eat, and who asked her the same questions. The only exception was the fifth sister, who said, "You are going after your husband who is not far from here. Go down the road until you come to a place where some young women are washing and laughing as they wash. Among their clothes you will find those that belong to your husband. Take them with you. These young women will tell you where your husband is."

She followed the old woman's directions and found the place where the young women were washing. Here she saw Caske's clothing and asked the young women if they could tell her where Caske was. They replied that he had gone to a dance where he was going to be married. They directed her to the dance where she found Caske dancing with a very pretty girl. She watched them for a long time, until Caske turned around and saw his wife looking at him. He came over to her and took her away from the people. When they were alone, he took an acorn out of his pocket and cracked it. It contained clothes for his wife, as hers were all ragged from her travels. Caske cracked another acorn and got horses and a wagon. They then rode home, where they lived happily together for a long time.

THE ORPHAN BOY

Translated by Julia LaFramboise

At one time, long ago, a friendless orphan boy lived in a large village on the seashore. One day, becoming tired of his surroundings, he got into a large canoe and paddled out to sea. A terrible storm came up and cast him upon a lonely island, where he lived in solitude until one day a large canoe, containing several men, landed. They told the boy, who met them at the beach, that they were going to a distant shore where there was a well which, when salt was thrown into it, would create gold. The men had their canoe filled with salt for that purpose. The boy was glad to take passage with them.

They were on the ocean many days before they came to the well. When they arrived, they threw in their salt and got a great deal of gold, yet they wanted more. So they sent the orphan boy down in a sack, in spite of his cries and screams, threatening to keep him in the bottom of the well until he had filled the sack with gold. They used all their ropes in an attempt to get him to the bottom of the well; then they fastened poles together. At length, after many poles had been fastened together, the boy reached the bottom of the well where he found many gold coins at the mouth of a huge cave. He filled two sacks with coins, and attached them to a rope with himself on the top of the sack. After this had been done, he signaled to the men at the top jerking the rope that was ready to ascend. They commenced to pull him up. He was almost within reach of the mouth of the well when the rope and poles gave way, letting the boy drop to the bottom of the well again.

When the boy recovered consciousness, he heard a great noise above him which sounded like a whirlwind. To his terror, he found that it was coming nearer down the well. He crept into the large sack, but was soon conscious of being carried upward, past the mouth of the well and high into the air. He now knew for certain that he was the captive of a large bird. After what seemed to be ages, he was put down. When he crept out of the bag, he saw that he was in an eagle's nest.

The old eagle was about to tear him to pieces but, seeing the boy's wretchedness, took compassion on him and brooded him with her young. The nest was in the top of a very tall cottonwood tree which stood alone on a plain. One day when the old eagle was gone, he commenced climbing down the tree. It took him a long time to slide down, and when he reached the ground, he was scarcely able to move. The branches had torn his clothes and skin so badly that his flesh was exposed and raw. Yet he knew it would be certain death to remain where he was, so he crept away, rested for a while, and moved on a little further until he reached a river where he quenched his thirst. Shortly after he came to the river, two beautiful young women appeared along the river bank and took compassion on him. They bound up his wounds and fed him; and when he was able to walk, they took him home with them.

They lived in a splendid palace with many hundreds of rooms in it, each filled with curious and beautiful things from all parts of the world. Here they took care of him until he was well again. After he was well, they adopted him for their brother, and for the first time, the poor boy was very happy.

One day, his sisters told him they were going away from home for the day. Before they left, they told him he could amuse himself in any portion of the house with the exception of one room, which he was never to enter. Then, after giving him the keys to the place, they departed. He went from room to room, admiring the many beautiful things he saw. When night came, his sisters had not returned, and he had not yet seen all the rooms in the palace.

The next day, he went over the other rooms. At length, he came to the forbidden room, where he paused a long time on the threshold. He put the key into the key-hole, then pulled it out with a shudder at the thought of the possible consequences and passed on. Yet when he had seen all the other rooms, he returned to the forbidden one. This time he opened it and saw a fiery steed, milk white with golden markings, wondrously beautiful. Its eyes flashed as he led it from the palace and mounted it.

He had scarcely gotten firmly seated before the horse flew into the air with the boy on its back. The speed of its flight took his breath away, and he fainted. When he recovered consciousness, he was lying wounded and bleeding on the sea-shore. Raising his head, he looked around and recognized the place from whence he had embarked months before. An old woman came along and took him to her home, where he told of his experiences. She immediately re-told his tale to the great chief of the town, who had him brought to his palace for an interview. After he had told his story a second time, the chief said, "Those young women that you call sisters are my long lost daughters. They were carried away by a man one day, years ago, when they were swimming. The horse that flew away with you is my long lost horse. When he came near home, he left you by the seashore, where you were found. Through you, I have gotten back my beautiful horse, and he has told me where my daughters can be found."

The chief sent men in canoes after his daughters. There was great rejoicing in the town on the day when they were returned. The lonely orphan boy became the Chief's son and was made chief over all the warriors in the country.

CANKTEWIN--THE ILL FATED WOMAN

Translated by Julia LaFramboise

Part I

Once there was a large village in which there lived an honorable man who was called to all the great feasts. He took an active part in the dances to the Sun and to the Heyoka [anti-natural deity]. He had ten sons, all of whom were handsome braves, and two fair daughters.

Now, as spring drew near, and according to their usual custom, they started out on their spring hunt. The young braves took their two sisters with them. The five oldest brothers were to hunt game for the older sister, and the other five for the younger sister. After traveling a long distance, they selected their camping ground. Day by day, the brothers vied with one another in bringing to their sisters the choicest game.

As one time wore on, the younger sister, who was the more amiable of the two, became the favorite. To her white deer-skin tent came the choicest game of the forest and lake. So, in consequence, jealousy grew in the breast of the older sister. One morning, after the departure of her brothers, she decked herself in fine clothes and trinkets, after which she picked up an ax and told her sister that she was going to get firewood. She followed the well worn path of her brothers through the forest until she came to a tall tree, where she perched herself among its thick branches. There she waited until evening, when her eldest brother came in sight, heavily laden with deer. As he passed beneath her she struck his head a blow with her ax that broke his skull. Then she descended from the tree and dragged him into the bushes, after which she resumed her hiding place before the second brother appeared. She disposed of him in the same manner, and the same with the next, until all of the ten brothers were killed. Then she went home to her sister and affected great distress and uneasiness for their non-appearance. The really distressed younger sister looked in vain for their coming that night.

Next morning, the younger girl, upon awakening, saw that her sister was busy out doors by the fire. To her horror, she saw that her sister had the ten heads of her murdered brothers; she was scalping them and sewing together the scalps for a mantle. Then she heard her exclaim, "What shall I do? I lack just one scalp of finishing my beautiful mantle. O! I'll complete it with my sister's scalp!" The younger sister, upon hearing these words, fled in terror from the tent to the deepest recess of the forest, where she wailed out her anguish, calling on the Wanaghis [ghosts] to avenge her lost brothers.

When night came and darkness spread over the earth, her attention was attracted by a low whistle, then another whistle, longer and louder; then one to the north of her; then another to the east; then to the south and to the east; then to the south and west. Afterward came a stillness that even the insects dared not disturb, while close by her, a voice said, "Sister, it is your murdered brothers that whistled. Go home and go to bed! In the night you hear this whistling, as you did just now, but fear not. When you hear this whistling, your elder sister will say, 'My sister, get up and light the fire,' but do not heed her though she implores you to get up."

So she went home, where her sister still worked on the scalp mantle. After a while, they both

retired. They were awakened at midnight by the whistling. At the first sound, the elder sister called to the younger, whose name was Canktewin, and entreated her to light the fire. But Canktewin slept until morning. When she awakened, she found that her sister was already up and about. When Canktewin came out of the tent, her sister cried angrily at her, "Go back, or I will kill you with this!" wielding a human leg. It was one of her own legs that the ghost of one of her brothers had pulled off. The elder sister's face had become so distorted during the night that Canktewin found it difficult to recognize her. The elder sister, after threatening Canktewin's life, sat down again, muttering to herself in the manner of witches. At length, she arose and hopped off on one leg, carrying the other one under her arm.

The elder sister had hardly gotten out of sight before Canktewin left the tent and fled for her life. She ran until out of breath, but when she paused to rest, she heard a voice in the distance which she recognized as her sister's, who was pursuing her. Upon looking back, Canktewin saw the unsightly creature hopping toward her at the rate of one or two yards at a hop, with her scalp mantle streaming behind her. She had nearly overtaken the helpless Canktewin when they encountered a small swamp. The one-legged creature, in trying to extricate herself from the mire, pulled the other leg off. Unable to proceed further, she died there.

In the meantime, Canktewin came to the shore of a beautiful lake. Off in the distance, on the surface of the lake, gleamed something which, when it came closer to the bank, proved to be a metal canoe with a single boatman. She hid in the bushes, but it was too late to escape the sight of the boatman, for he landed just below her, walked up to her hiding place, and commanded her to get into his canoe. But when she began to step into the canoe, she saw a hundred snakes in its prow, each of which hissed at her. She drew back in terror, only to be driven forward by her captor. Again, the snakes jumped toward her. When their master commanded them to be silent, they obeyed him, and Canktewin got into the canoe and seated herself among them. The man then got in and paddled until the sun was on the west side, when they came in sight of a very high precipice. As the canoe drew nearer, a door flew open, and the man ordered her to get out. She stepped into a great stone hall, where a little old woman was sitting by a huge fire and an immense pot containing stew.

Next morning, as the man was starting out in his metal canoe, he said to the old woman, "Grandmother, have another stew ready on my return." After his departure, the old woman wept and said, "O, my grandchild, why did you come here to the man eater's house? This man has eaten a great many young men and women, and you are the fairest of them all. I cannot kill you. Take this tomahawk and cleave open this old head of mine. My life has been long, but what use is it to me now? Take my body, put it into the pot and make a savory stew for the man-eater. Then take my severed arms and the ax to yonder island, tie them to a tree, and fly for your life. Go toward the east; run night and day until you come to a bright metal house."

Poor Canktewin wrung her hands in agony and said, "I cannot! O! I cannot! It is better that you do your work and kill me."

"Ah! my grandchild," said the old woman, "it would be but one of your kindest acts to take me away from this den to the happy land of the spirits, where all my kind have preceded me. I am nothing but a lightning-blasted tree whose center has been rotted out with age. Take, O take, my grandchild, this weapon and kill me." But her pleadings were in vain. Canktewin would not kill

her. The old woman then threw herself into the boiling pot.

Canktewin, upon seeing what the old woman had done, became horrified and wept until the declining sun reminded her that she must escape before the man-eater returned. But before leaving, she severed the arms of the old woman, which, together with the ax, she carried to the island where she tied them to a tree. Then she fled.

Soon after her flight, the man-eater returned to find his grandmother gone. In answer to his call, he heard her voice from the far off island. Again he called. This time he heard her answer that she would come as soon as the wood was chopped. He sat down to wait, listening to the strokes of her ax. After a while he became angry at her delay and started after her. When he arrived at the island, he found only her arms, which were chopping wood. He knew then that Canktewin had escaped. His anger was so great that he foamed at the mouth as he started in pursuit.

In the meantime, Canktewin ran night and day until suddenly a bright light dazzled her eyes. After she had become used to the strange light, she discerned a metal house. Her limbs by now were so tired that she could scarcely stand up. But she was quickly aroused from her pause by a yell of rage. Turning around, she saw the man-eater running toward her with a flashing tomahawk in his hand. He was only a few steps behind her when she reached the metal house, by the steps of which sat a man carving a large pipe. Carved images were fastened to his ears; they winked and blinked at her when he turned his head. She cried, "Save me, and I'll be your cousin!" Still he was silent. She screamed in desperation, "Save me, and I'll be your sister!" The man-eater almost had her in his grasp when the silent man sprang to his feet and pushed her into his metal house. "Why did you not say you were my sister before?" he asked.

In the meantime, the man-eater, shouting angrily at the top of his voice, kept running around the house. This annoyed the silent man, so he said, "My pets, go and eat him up; he troubles me." He opened a side door that let out a lion and a tiger who immediately sprung upon the man-eater, tore him to pieces, and commenced to devour him. But each piece that touched the ground became a man-eater, and it was only when they ate up the ground on which his blood dropped that they were victorious.

Part II

Canktewin was very happy to become the silent man's sister. The many rooms of her brother's house were decorated with braided belts, moccasins, quilled blankets and leggings. Some of the articles were unfinished. "These," said her brother, as she was surveying them, "are the handwork of my former adopted sister, who was deceived and killed during my absence. Now I am going to leave you, but do not, on any account, open the door to anyone while I am gone." So saying, he set out on a journey to a far country.

One day, when Canktewin was working on one of the unfinished belts, she heard a pleading voice at the door saying, "Aunt, do let me in 'ere I perish in the cold. I am the silent man's child and he sent me to you." This wailing voice repeated its demand for admittance at regular intervals until her sympathizing heart could withstand it no longer. She admitted a small boy with a large mouth. His strange deformity made her shrink back, but when she remembered that it was her protector's

child, she led him to the fire and warmed him, where he fell asleep. She sat and watched him. As he slept, his mouth opened wider and wider until she saw a man's foot coming out of his throat. She immediately awoke the ugly creature, saying "Get up, my nephew, and fetch some wood; our fire is going out." As he stepped out, she closed and barred the door. The boy, who was but a demon in disguise, saw that he had been fooled. He raged and raved at the door for along time, but it was to no purpose. Canktewin would not let him in a second time. When her brother returned, he praised her wisdom in escaping the wiles of such an enemy.

She lived with her brother many happy years, but after a time, she began thinking of her lonely parents, bereft of their children, and became seized with the desire to return and comfort them. When she made known the cause of her unhappiness to her brother, he told her to go home at once. But before she left, he gave her instructions on how to avoid the many dangers she would find on her journey.

One day, when she was traveling through a large village, she was chased by the men, women, children, and dogs who inhabited the place. But she looked straight before her and did not heed their uproar. When she came to the outskirts of the town, there was a furious earthquake which nearly swallowed her up. She ran, in order to get away from the new danger, but on looking around saw a large spotted dog which was fiercely pursuing her. She was nearly out of breath when the dog also became tired out and abandoned the pursuit.

Shortly afterwards, she heard a child-like voice calling her name. She looked around and spied a dwarf in the branches of a tree. He tried in every way to make her speak. She had nearly passed out of sight when his extreme insolence made her command him to be still. Whereupon he came down and told her that she could not pass until she had shot arrows with him. She shot arrows with him and lost them. He led the way in the hunt for them until they came to an enclosure, where he told her she was his slave. Looking around, she found every avenue of escape closed and barred. All she could see was a large field, where hundreds of scalplless young men and women were toiling. The dwarf left her to give an offering to the Tahkushkanshkan [the motion god] for permitting him to find another slave. When he was preparing for his ceremony, he retired to his round hut and called for Canktewin to bring his heated stone. When she was handing it to him, he pulled off her scalp. After the dwarf finished his offering, he bound Canktewin and seated her in the center of his round house.

After she had been seated there awhile, she saw a large black stone slowly descending toward her from the top of the rood. To save herself, she threw up her hand, in which was a small sharp stick. The stick pierced through the soft center of the stone, which contained the dwarf's heart, immediately killing him. She then ran out to the field and proclaimed freedom to the poor scalped creatures. They all went to a nearby lake where they bathed their heads in the water. Their scalps were immediately restored to their heads. Then she continued on her way homeward while the other slaves, after thanking her for freeing them, returned to theirs.

One day, while still on her journey, she walked along the shore of a lake, where she met two young women who asked her to bathe in the lake with them. Before doing so, they informed her that the fates had decreed that whoever dove up from beneath the surface of the water in the center of the lake, which was marked by a tuft of wild rice, would be taken as his wife by Wahmnuhahtahghosha [the Pearl Spitter]. Canktewin was the only one who succeeded in coming up at the tuft of wild

rice. Then they proceeded on their journey together until they saw a beautiful canoe come to the shore, out of which a young man stepped, saying, "I am the Pearl Spitter." Then, as Canktewin was getting ready to step into the canoe, the two young women pushed her aside and stepped in themselves.

Canktewin was now alone again. She followed the lake's shore until another canoe came in sight. This was far more beautiful than the first, and the boatman far more handsome than the other. He sprang ashore and began to spit beautiful pearls of all sizes. This proved him to be the real Pearl Spitter, the first one being an imposter. She eagerly gathered the pearls. Then they entered the canoe and paddled to the opposite side, where there was a large village, the Pearl Spitter's home. Here they lived in great happiness, until one evening when there was a grand feast to which they were both invited. While they were at the feast, her two rivals in the diving contest saw her with the real Pearl Spitter; whereupon they were filled with envy and jealousy. They followed Pearl Spitter and his wife home, where they drove Canktewin out of the house and occupied it themselves. The counterfeit Pearl Spitter came in great wrath, and called the real Pearl Spitter a coward, whereupon they had a fight. They destroyed the village during this struggle, also all the trees by the lake, and shook up the waters of the lake so that it was never clear from that time on. But at length, by cowardly wiles, the counterfeit Pearl Spitter overcame his noble antagonist. Poor Canktewin stayed long enough to wail over the grave, then went home and comforted her father and mother all the days of their lives.

The Meaning of the Myth

In the myth of "Canktewin, the Ill Fated-Woman," we have a peculiar character study. The name, "Ill-Fated Woman," was chosen to express the original Santee meaning. Canktewin gives only a part of the native idea. Cankte (the win is the feminine termination on proper names), in Dakota, means a tree that has been blasted by lightning. It is also used as an attribute to the great Thunder God, who kills the trees by his flash. By figure of speech, it seems to be used of this young woman who, though amiable and full of good intent, always brings disaster on those with whom she is connected, as well as on herself. But as for herself, she miraculously escapes every time, only to fall into new dangers and stir up more trouble.

Thus by her amiability, she captivates her brothers and arouses the jealousy of her sister, causing the death of them all. She falls into the hands of the man-eater, only to cause the death of the good grandmother who befriends her and shows her how to escape. She is nearly re-captured because she fails to say the right word in time. She almost brings ruin to her new benefactor, the silent man, and death to herself by opening his house to the demon. On her road home, by failing to keep still one moment longer, she falls into the hands of the wicked dwarf and loses her scalp. And later, as was seen in the second part of the story, she brings disaster on her lover and the village and country in which he lives by the jealousy she arouses in her rivals. Consistently fortunate herself, she brings misfortune to the people who are connected with her. True, she liberates the scalpless maidens toiling in the fields of the wicked dwarf, and at last goes home to cherish her parents in their last days. But these are only incidents, and not main points of her life.

Doubtless other ideas, mythological and philosophical, may be traced in this story. Its most evident meaning, however, is as a study in character.

THE BEAVER

(Translator Anonymous)

Once Unktomi (Evil Spirit) was going along the bank of a river when he saw a little beaver fast asleep on the shore. Unktomi, chuckling to himself said, "Now I'll have some fun." He took the bark from a nearby tree and with it carefully tied up the little beaver. Then he carried it a long way off to a high hill; where, after untying it, he woke it up by asking, "Why brother, how did you get here?"

The little beaver, half asleep and thinking he was still by the river bank, turned over and attempted to dive into what he thought was water. After making several attempts to dive into the ground, he opened his eyes and saw that he was a long way from home. Meanwhile, Unktomi laughed and laughed until he nearly fell over.

It took the little beaver a long time to get to the river. The grass had been burnt off, and the sole of his feet were cut by the stubble. Unktomi followed at a distance, making the most of his practical joke. After this occurrence, Unktomi traveled for many days. One day when the weather was very warm, he lay down to rest and fell asleep. The little beaver found him asleep and said, "Now I'll have my revenge."

He dug a tunnel from the nearby river which ran water to Unktomi. The beaver kept on digging until there was a vast lake around his enemy with nothing but a small island in the center, on which Unktomi slept. When the beaver finished, he said to Unktomi, "Why my brother, how did you happen here?" This question caused Unktomi, who was partly aroused, to turn over. In doing so, he splashed into the lake that the beaver had built. The beaver left the vicinity before Unktomi came to the surface. His surprise was so great that he was nearly drowned before he recovered his presence of mind. When he rose to the surface, he tried in vain to climb up on the little island. But with every effort, a piece of the earth would cave in until the island was completely demolished. Then, nearly exhausted, he struck out for the shore, reaching it shortly before his strength gave out. He stretched himself out on the bank to rest. When he had recovered from his experience, he looked around to see if the little beaver was laughing at him; and sure enough, there was his face grinning above the surface of the water.

THE HUNTER

(Translator Anonymous)

In the olden days, long before the first pale-faced set foot in this country, a small band of Indians were camped near the Cypress Hill, where they were well supplied with wood and water. There they had good pasture for their ponies, who were very scarce and highly prized by the Indians. One of the Indians who lived in this village, named Arrow-points, was a hunter who provided meat for his wife and the little Arrow-points. To do this, he had to spend many days away from his home, traveling great distances to secure sufficient game for his family's needs. There, in strange hunting grounds, he was in constant danger of being killed by the war parties of other tribes. In those days, the only weapon was the bow and arrow; he had to use a great deal of cunning in order to get near

enough to the game to kill it.

One day, when he was stalking a herd of antelope, he was surprised by a band of Blackfeet Indians, who were out on a horse-stealing expedition. Arrow-point had to run for his life. No matter how fast he ran, the Blackfeet kept gaining on him, so it became evident that unless some help came, he would soon be slain. As he ran, he called on his feet, "Oh my feet, run, or I will be killed by our enemy," but his feet answered back, "Call on your head--when you eat, you give all to your head and never think of us." Again Arrow-point called out, "Oh my feet, run, and I shall always remember you when I eat." But still his feet remained stubborn. So, seeing that all was lost, he threw himself on the ground and said, "All right, when I am killed, my head will be placed on a pole, and all the Blackfeet nation will dance around and admire it, but you, you will be cut off and thrown to the dogs." With that threat, his feet began to jump and hop in a great fright to get away. He sprang to his feet and flew over the ground, quickly out-distancing his pursuers.

He soon reached his home in safety, and in fulfillment of the promise to his feet, he had them bathed in buffalo fat for two days and nights. He was now the swiftest runner in his tribe, often beating his companions' fastest horses. The Indians changed his name to Eagle-foot. Remembering his narrow escape from death, he always wiped his hands on his feet when through eating. This is a custom that has been observed by the Indians to this day.