**The Fire Leggings**

There had been a sudden change in the weather. A cold rain was falling, and the night comes early when the clouds hang low. The children loved a bright fire, and tonight War Eagle's lodge was light as day. Away off on the plains a wolf was howling, and the rain pattered upon the lodge as though it never intended to quit. It was a splendid night for storytelling, and War Eagle filled and lighted the great stone pipe, while the children made themselves comfortable about the fire.

A spark sprang from the burning sticks, and fell upon Fine Bow's bare leg. They all laughed heartily at the boy's antics to rid himself of the burning coal; and as soon as the laughing ceased War Eagle laid aside the pipe. An Indian's pipe is large to look at, but holds little tobacco.

"See your shadows on the lodge wall?" asked the old warrior. The children said they saw them, and he continued:

"Some day I will tell you a story about them, and how they drew the arrows of our enemies, but tonight I am going to tell you of the great fire-leggings.

"It was long before there were men and women on the world, but my grandfather told me what I shall now tell you.

"The gray light that hides the night stars was creeping through the forests, and the wind the Sun sends to warn the people of his coming was among the fir tops. Flowers, on slender stems, bent their heads out of respect for the herald wind's Master, and from the dead top of a pinetree the Yellowhammer beat upon his drum and called 'the Sun is awake - all hail the Sun!'

"Then the bush birds began to sing the song of the morning, and from alders the Robins joined, until all live things were awakened by the great music. Where the tall ferns grew, the Doe waked her Fawns, and taught them to do homage to the Great Light. In the creeks, where the water was still and clear, and where throughout the day, like a delicate damaskeen, the shadows of leaves that overhang would lie, the Speckled Trout broke the surface of the pool in his gladness of the coming day. Pine-squirrels chattered gayly, and loudly proclaimed what the wind had told; and all the shadows were preparing for a great journey to the Sand Hills, where the ghost-people dwell.

"Under a great spruce tree - where the ground was soft and dry, OLD-man slept. The joy that thrilled creation disturbed him not, although the Sun was near. The bird-people looked at the sleeper in wonder, but the Pine squirrel climbed the great spruce tree with a pinecone in his mouth. Quickly he ran out on the limb that spread over OLD-man, and dropped the cone on the sleeper's face. Then he scolded OLD-man, saying: 'Get up - get up - lazy one - lazy one - get up - get up.'

"Rubbing his eyes in anger, OLD-man sat up and saw the Sun coming - his hunting leggings slipping through the thickets - setting them afire, till all the Deer and Elk ran out and sought new places to hide.

"'Ho, Sun!' called OLD-man, 'those are mighty leggings you wear. No wonder you are a great hunter. Your leggings set fire to all the thickets, and by the light you can easily see the Deer and Elk; they cannot hide. Ho! Give them to me and I shall then be the great hunter and never be hungry.'

"'Good,' said the Sun, 'take them, and let me see you wear my leggings.'

"OLD-man was glad in his heart, for he was lazy, and now he thought he could kill the game without much work, and that he could be a great hunter - as great as the Sun. He put on the leggings and at once began to hunt the thickets, for he was hungry. Very soon the leggings began to burn his legs. The faster he travelled the hotter they grew, until in pain he cried out to the Sun to come and take back his leggings; but the Sun would not hear him. On and on OLD-man ran. Faster and faster he flew through the country, setting fire to the brush and grass as he passed. Finally he came to a great river, and jumped in. Sizzzzzzz - the water said, when OLD-man's legs touched it. It cried out, as it does when it is sprinkled upon hot stones in the sweat-lodge, for the leggings were very hot. But standing in the cool water OLD-man took off the leggings and threw them out upon the shore, where the Sun found them later in the day.

"The Sun's clothes were too big for OLD-man, and his work too great.

"We should never ask to do the things which Manitou did not intend us to do. If we keep this always in mind we shall never get into trouble.

"Be yourselves always. That is what Mantou intended. Never blame the Wolf for what he does. He was made to do such things. Now I want you to go to your fathers' lodges and sleep. Tomorrow night I will tell you why there are so many snakes in the world. Ho!"