

# Ga-Saak and the <sup>26.</sup> Mun-Maan-Taks

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**T**HE following legend of Ga-Saak and the Mun-Maan-Taks is very generally known among the Cowichan Indians, the facts varying but little, although I have been given three names for the tribe—the Mun-Maan-Taks or Stoneheads, Quaht-Khum or Short People, and Smut-Sun-Tus or Hammer Heads.

A curious feature of the legend is that, although the older members of the Cowichans insist that this tribe once existed, yet they appear to have no further knowledge of them beyond this one story. On several occasions I had been told portions of the legend, but there were gaps in the story; names and places confused or forgotten, and always a vagueness as to the ending. Then one day I learned that Johnny Ts-Lai-Tzer, of Quamichan, knew the story from beginning to end, so to Quamichan I made my way.

I found the Ts-Lai-Tzers in a one-roomed cottage built at the back of the great old lodges that stand along the bank of the Quamichan River.

Mrs. Ts-Lai-Tzer, a thin little old woman in a clean blue dress, with a blue handkerchief tied over her white hair, came to meet me as I picked my way across a series of small streams that ran past her door.

Close beside the cottage were the ruins of a lodge.

## Blown Down by Storm

"MY father's house," explained Mrs. Ts-Lai-Tzer; "my poor father's house! Blown down in the great wind this Winter. I like to be here, near the house where I lived when I was a little girl," she said. "For a time we have been living over at Green Point, but," she sniffed disdainfully, "the Indian ladies over there were not very nice people, and my good English friends have gone to England, so I have brought my man here."

Her husband was ill in bed. From the doorway I could see him propped amongst spotless pillows, as he ate an orange his old wife had cut up for him.

"He's very sick," she told me, as she broke three eggs into a pan and in some miraculous manner fried them over the top of an ancient heater. "It takes all my time to fix him up, that's why I'm so late with my lunch! Ah, well!" She gave a great sigh. "I take good care of him, then he'll last longer!"

She changed the blue handkerchief for a grubby white hat trimmed with a pink ribbon, which perched on the top of her head in a ludicrous fashion and, carrying her plate of eggs and bread with her, sat down beside me on the platform outside her door.

It was such a peaceful spot. The warm Spring air heavy with scent from the cottonwoods where they lined the river banks in the distance, their sticky buds leaning out into a lacework of softest green, with here and there a cherry tree standing out amongst them laden with snowy white blossom; and, as a never changing background, the murmur of the river as it rippled past.

But Mrs. Ts-Lai-Tzer had finished her lunch and was ready to talk.

"That story you want to hear," she commenced, tipping her hat over her eyes: "It's a very good one, and it's long, so I'll begin right away.

"Long ago a queer tribe of people lived over near that mountain people call 'Tzouhalem.' They owned all the mountain and a big piece at the bottom called Hay-Nupt-Sun. These people were just like my people only they were short and their heads were made of stone, just their faces being left like ours; and the name they had was Mun-Maan-Tak, or Stonehead. Well, over on that point—Green Point they call it now—at the bottom of the mountain, there lived another tribe of people like the Cowichans, and the chief of this tribe had one daughter, such a fine-looking girl! One

21  
day the chief of the Stoneheads saw this girl and he stole her and took her to be his wife.

## Jealous of the Girl

“THIS man already had one wife, a Stonehead woman, and when she saw how much her husband liked his new woman she got mad, and all day and all night she thought and thought of a way to get rid of that girl.

“One night, when all were asleep, she went out to the back of the house and threw herself down in the mud and rolled about in it, then she ran into the house and called to her husband: ‘Come quickly and see what has happened to me!’

“All her people woke and ran to see what was the matter.

“‘Where have you been?’ called her husband. ‘Why are you covered with mud?’

“‘See,’ she cried, ‘see what the brother of that young wife of yours has done to me! I could not sleep and walked outside the house and he came after me! What are you going to do about it.’

“His husband did not wait to hear more. He took his spear, pushed away his young wife, as she tried to hold him, and ran outside.

“Through the woods and out to the Point he ran, never stopping until he came to the house of his brother-in-law. With a great shout, he broke open the door and, as the man and his family woke from sleep, calling to ask, ‘Who is it? What is the matter?’ he killed them, one after the other, with his spear.

“Well, when the young wife heard what her husband had done, she ran away that same night, and went back to her father’s house.

“‘Let me stay with you!’ she begged him, ‘until after my child is born. After that I will make a home for myself.’

“‘You may stay,’ said her father, ‘and if the child is a girl it may live, but if it is a boy, I will kill it, for no son of Mun-Maan-Taks shall live with my people!’

## Grandmother Promises Help

“WHEN the girl’s old grandmother heard this, she told her granddaughter, ‘Come and stay in my house until your child is born, and if it is a boy, I will help you to save it!’

“So the girl lived in the old woman’s house until one night a baby boy was born to her.

“‘Give it to me!’ said the old granny, ‘give it to me! We must be quick, before your father sees it!’ Taking strips of beaten cedar bark, she bound them about the little body, then wrapped it round in bigger pieces, as all

our people covered their babies in the old days. Then she took it to her son.

"See!" she said to him; "see the fine granddaughter your girl has for you! What good luck that it is not a boy, for we could never keep a son of the Stoneheads in our family!"

"The old man was pleased when he saw what a fine baby it was. "Take it back to its mother!" he said. "A good thing it is a girl; it would be a pity to have to kill such a fine child!"

"The granny hurried back to her house and called to her granddaughter, "Come quickly! We cannot stay here, for we cannot always hide from people that this child is a little boy. We must make a home for ourselves far back in the woods, where no one can find us!"

"Well, now!" exclaimed Mrs. Ts-Lai-Tzer, taking a final scrape at her plate, "well now, there was just a little light coming into the sky as the old granny, followed by the young mother carrying her baby, started out to find a hiding-place from the tribe.

"When light came they hid in the thick woods which grew close to the rocks where the old stone Catholic Church now stands, then, when night came, out they crept and, going to the stream which runs below that church, they bathed the baby. The cold water made the baby cry, and some of the people heard it. "Listen!" they said, "it sounds as though a child were crying down by the creek!" And that," said Mrs. Ts-Lai-Tzer, "is why we call that stream 'Schy-Elah' or 'Cry Creek,' and do you know"—she tapped my arm with a thin brown finger—"in the old days—and when I was a girl—no young wife would ever drink water from that stream; if she did, her babies would be poor, crying children!"

### Gives Name to Creek

"WELL, so they went on, walking, walking at night and hiding in the daytime. The second night they stopped at another stream and again they washed the baby. Now the old woman had carried with her a big clam shell to dip water in, so that the baby could drink, and at this stream she left the shell behind and it turned into stone, and do you know that all these years there has been a big stone up there beside the stream, just like a shell, but my husband tells me that now it has gone. I s'pose," she added, with a shrug of her shoulders, "that some lady has got it in her garden to put a flower in. But because of that one shell, that creek has always been called 'Tzaatz-Whytn'—like a basin.

"At last they got to a bigger stream, and up this they walked until they came to a good clear place beside the water. Here they made a little house of cedar branches and began beating more cedar bark to wrap the baby in.

"We will call him Ga-Saak," said his mother, "and we will take such care of him that he will grow to be a fine man!"

"So every morning his granny took Ga-Saak down to the stream to bathe him. On the way she gathered boughs of hemlock and, dipping these in the water, she rubbed his little body all over—for hemlock makes a man very clean and strong—then she shook out the branches and piled them on a big rock. The first morning, after she had washed him, she shook the branches as I have told you, and as the drops fell back into the stream they changed into big, fat trout!

"We are sent here to feed you," said the first trout as it fell, and after that there were always plenty of fish in the stream for them to eat. After a time the trout swam back and back along the stream until they came to a lake, and ever since then there have been trout in the stream we call 'Jaynes' Creek, and back in Quamichan Lake. And do you know"—she wiped her plate carefully with a small crust and threw it to some chickens scratching beside us—"do you know, ever since that time some of the men of our tribe have gone up to that same place to bathe and rub themselves with hemlock, and they have always piled their branches on the big rock, until now there is a great, high pile of rotten boughs lying there. Even at this time there is an old medicine man, a doctor, who goes to bathe up there, and the big rock is still called Ga-Saak's Rock!"

### Starts Hunting Early

"WHEN he was three or four years old, Ga-Saak's mother made him a little bow and arrows, and with these he killed small birds which they ate, but he always kept the skins, with the heads and the wings still joined on, and stretching them on sticks, put them in the sun to dry, then laid them carefully away.

"Later his mother made him a larger bow and he shot deer and elk. The skins of these animals he dried and put on poles, making a nice warm house, with a little fire on the floor in the middle.

"When they dried the deer meat he kept the sinews, and taking some apart used them to sew his bird skins together into a sort of cloak, with places for his arms so that when he held his arms out it looked as if he had wings. And ah! this cloak was beautiful with so many bright feathers of every color shining upon it, and Ga-Saak felt very proud when he looked at it.

"He had now the feathers of every kind of bird but one sewn on it. That one was the eagle, and although he had tried many times, he had never been able to kill one of the great birds. But he felt he must have some eagle feathers, and at last thought of a plan.

"Taking his big bow he killed an elk, and, after taking out all the inside, he pulled it to a clear space near where the church called St. Peter's is built—and then crawled inside the animal's body and waited. Very soon an eagle, seeing the dead elk lying on the ground, came flying round. Lower and lower it came. Ga-Saak waited until it was close to the body, then he reached out and caught it by the neck, and very quickly killed it. It was a big white-headed eagle with a fine white tail, and when he had dried the skin, Ga-Saak sewed it on his cloak. Now the cloak was finished, and, putting it on, Ga-Saak walked through the woods thinking.

Mrs. Ts-Lai-Tzer stopped abruptly. "Do you know what he was thinking?" she asked. No. Well, I'll tell you. You see, whenever Ga-Saak went hunting his mother always said to him, "Go that way," and pointed back to the lake. "Never go over near the sea water." But she would never tell him why he must not go. Then another thing, whenever he asked about his father and why they lived alone, never seeing other people, she would stop him quickly. "Don't ask me," she would say. "Your father was a bad man. If his people saw you, they would kill you. We must always live here by ourselves."

### Search for Men

"SO Ga-Saak walked along, thinking. 'Now I am grown and have my spear and my big bow and arrow, I'll go over that way and see what other people look like, and perhaps I will be the one to do the killing.'

"So he walked on until he got to the place where the old stone church is built, and there he saw a lot of men running about playing a game with sticks and a round piece of wood, and he saw that these men had heads made of stone. Well, he watched them for a while and then he went back to his mother and told her about them.

"Ah!" she said, "those are your father's people, the Mun-Maan-Taks. If they get you they will kill you," and she begged him never to go there again.

"Now Ga-Saak made up his mind that he would kill all those Stonehead people, but he knew that before he could do it he must be very strong and well. So every morning he would bathe and rub himself with hemlock boughs and he would lie in the sun at that place where St. Peter's Church is now, and would think how he was going to kill all those men. Well, one day he put on his feather cloak and lay out in the sun, as I have said, and after he had been there a little time he heard a voice in the air talking to him.

"Give me your cloak and I will give you mine," said the voice.

"No," said Ga-Saak. "I made this myself, and I want it."

"Take mine," said the voice again. "Change with me, mine is better than yours." 29

But Ga-Saak would not listen, and went home.

### Takes Lightning's Cloak

"A FEW days after that, he was lying in the same place when he saw something away off, flying towards him. He lay watching it, wondering what it could be. It looked like a line of red coming across the sky. When it got near him, Ga-Saak saw that it was a flying man dressed in a cloak like his, but very red, and he knew that this was Tsu-Quhas (Lightning) who had been talking to him.

"Try my cloak, Go-Saak," said the man. "If you will wear it you can fly all over the world and no one can see you when you have it on, for it is a Spirit cloak."

"Well," said Ga-Saak, "I'll try it." So they changed cloaks, and Ga-Saak found he could fly right up in the air just as Tsu-Quhas has done. "It is a good cloak," he told the man. "I will change with you." So Tsu-Quhas flew away in Ga-Saak's feather cloak.

"Now Ga-Saak in his new cloak flew high up over the trees and then down to Hay-Nupt-Sun, and there were the Stoneheads playing their game. Ga-Saak flew right down beside them, but as Tsu-Quhas had told him, they could not see him; they could only hear the noise he made going through the air.

"After that Ga-Saak saw Tsu-Quhas again, and this time the man showed him how to make all kinds of medicines—poisons to kill people, or to turn people to stone, and others which would make them come alive again.

"Now Ga-Saak was ready to go after the Mun-Maan-Taks; but first he must have a strong club. He got a piece of yew and made a great club; then, putting on his cloak, he flew up into the air and then down, past a big stone, hitting it as he passed. Ah! the club was not strong enough; it had split in half. Now he got a piece of hard hack and made another club. Again he tried it on the stone, and this time the stone split in half and there was no mark on his club. Spirit

"The next day he put on his Spirit cloak, and, taking the club, he flew over Hay-Nupt-Sun, and, as before, the men were playing with the ball. Down flew Ga-Saak amongst them and quickly hit them as they passed him; right on the heads he hit them, breaking them in half as he had broken the rock. The Mun-Maan-Taks could hear the noise of his club, but they could not see him, and in great fear they ran away to their homes. Two or three times Ga-Saak flew over Hay-Nupt-Sun, and each time he killed a lot of the men. Then those who were left talked to-

gether, trying to think how they could please this Spirit that came amongst them and killed so many. They agreed to give him one of their girls, so all the girls put oil on their heads and made themselves look nice and had to sit in front of the houses waiting for Ga-Saak to come.

## Takes the Dirty Girl

“WELL, there was one little girl sitting there who had no oil on her hair, so that it hung down over her face, and she had not washed and did not look nice. The girls made her sit at the end of the row, and all laughed at her, telling her that she would not be taken by the great Spirit. While they were talking, Ga-Saak flew down by them and listened to their talk, and when he saw the dirty little girl crying, he picked her up and carried her off to his home.

“After that, he went over and killed all the other Mun-Maan-Taks and told his mother ‘All those people are dead now; there is nothing for us to be afraid of.’ So for a long time Ga-Saak and his wife, his mother and his granny, who was now a very old woman, lived in the house back beside the stream.

“One day Ga-Saak heard a noise of someone calling, and, following the sound, he went down by the old village of Hay-Nupt-Sun; from there he saw a canoe coming over the water without being paddled and in it were three men.

“Now Ga-Saak had heard that a man called Hy-Altz was going round turning people into stone and changing the world, so when he saw the men, he flew home as quickly as he could to get his medicines.

“He told his family that he was going to fight Hy-Altz with the medicines; but he said to his mother and granny, ‘First I must find out whether my medicines will really turn people to stone. I will try it on you,’ and he shook some of the poison on to them.

## Both Medicines Potent

“AT once the poor women turned into rock, and, very pleased to find that his medicine was all right, Ga-Saak shook the

life-making medicine on them and they came 30.  
alive again.

“Now, the three men came along, and the first one called, ‘Is that you, Ga-Saak?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘You staying here?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Well, I’m going about turning people into stone, so that there can be more islands in the sea and to make the rivers run in different places. I am going to try my medicines on you.’

“‘Try my mother first,’ said Ga-Saak. So Hy-Altz shook some on the mother and turned her into stone, and at once Ga-Saak turned her back. Now Ga-Saak and Hy-Altz began fighting, throwing the poisons on each other, and all the time Hy-Altz drove Ga-Saak and his family back and back, until they came to Quamichan Lake, and here poor Ga-Saak found that he had no medicine left.

“‘You have us,’ he said to Hy-Altz. ‘Put my mother and granny at the end of the lake, my poor wife in the middle, and I will be at the mouth of the stream.’

“And,” said Mrs. Ts-Lai-Tzer, “I and my man have seen him. All our people know where he is. Deep in the water, there he is, just a big stone, and at that place the water never freezes, never, not even when the Winters are coldest. My man tells me that no one has ever seen that place with ice on it.”

Mrs. Ts-Lai-Tzer got to her feet. “That is the end of my story,” she said; “but if you will come again, I would like to tell you another. I have lots of good stories, and my sick man would like to help me remember them.”

She walked out to the river bank with me, and held my hand in both of hers as I said “Good-bye.”

“I have a new friend,” she said. “I will not forget you, and you have a new friend, too. That is good.”

She laughed and waved her tin plate to me as she turned to go back to that poor, sick husband of hers.