

"HWOL-TUP".

THE FLYING SPIRIT-MEN

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CUM-SEE-TUN'S wife, who, I have at last discovered is called La-The-Tha, had asked me to call and see the sweaters that she is making, so, taking advantage of a fine afternoon, I called at their house. The front room, spotless as usual, appeared to be filled with children when I went in, but at a word from Cum-See-Tun they all scurried outside like a lot of rabbits. La-The-Tha came forward to greet me and to shut the door upon the children.

"I have a housefull today," she explained. "My married daughter and her children are with us."

A good-looking young woman, very smartly dressed and with beautifully marcelled hair, got up from her seat on a bed and bowed and smiled shyly. The youngest girl then came in with an armfull of Indian sweaters, which she spread out on one of the beds for me to admire. The ladies of the family had evidently all visited a hairdresser recently, and they all wore silk dresses and smart shoes and stockings. I felt quite overcome at their appearance, but we were soon deep in discussion of the really beautiful sweaters which they had made. White or grey, with patterns worked in black or brown, stars, butterflies, birds and flowers—all very handsome. To my way of thinking these patterns, which they tell me they copy from books on filet crochet, are not to be compared with their own original and most decorative designs.

The married daughter had just finished an especially handsome one, with a quaint bird design—typically Indian—across the front, and was commencing another which, she told me, was to have butterflies worked in blue on a white ground.

"It's hard to sell them now," said La-The-Tha. "No one has much money. This year we have to make them cheaper than ever before! But we have lots of wool." She pointed to a row of boxes against the wall, all filled with enormous balls of black and white wool. "And lots more outside," she said, "and lots more sheep, if we can find the people to buy our sweaters!"

Cum-See-Tun laughed. "These women!" he said, with greatest scorn, "they just sit round all day making sweaters and talking, talking. They like to do it! No matter how many they sell, every day they make more

sweaters! Now, me! I'm working outside digging my potatoes. I'm busy; but come again, when I am not working; I have lots of good stories to tell you!"

Meeting the Spirits

"CUM-SEE-TUN," I said, "I want to ask you one thing before you go. The other day an old woman told me about some people who used to fly about the world. Have you ever heard that story?"

From her rocking-chair beside the stove La-The-Tha nodded her head.

"Yes, yes!" she said, "everybody knows about those people flying." Cum-See-Tun drew forward a chair and sat down. Forgotten were the potatoes and the hard work outside!

"Now see," he began, "I'll tell you about that flying. That is called 'Hwol-Tup.' First I'll tell you how, long, long ago, our people used to believe in lots of different spirits—one for the fishing, one for the hunting, another for medicine men, and for dancing. There were lots of them, and to talk to those spirits—to get them to listen—the man used to go far away where there were no other people. He would find a stream away in the mountains, and there he would stay without food or blankets, and he must pray all the time. He must not sleep for long at a time.

"Every night he must wash in the fresh water; four times he must do this washing. Four times each night he must dive into the water, and when he dives he must call to the spirit he wants to help him. Then, when he gets so weak that he can hardly walk, the spirit comes to him. And when he gets back to his people he is a good hunter, or can catch lots of fish—he is helped by the spirit he has called to.

"Well, this Hwol-Tup is something like that. If a man wants to fly he had to be clean, good, pure. The spirits will not listen to a man who is not all clean! He must leave his wife, and talk to no woman for many months; then he goes, as I have said, back in the mountains, all alone; and after the spirit has come to him he must get cedar bark, clean it and beat it for a long time, until it is very soft, and has long pieces falling down from it, and at the top of these long pieces, near the bark, he ties knots (like a fringe). Now he puts one piece round his neck and some on his arms and legs, all with the long fringes hanging down. Then he lies down beside the stream again, and

waits until the spirit comes to him. Sometimes he waits many days, sometimes the spirit comes to him quite soon. This is what happens when he feels the spirit in him. His arms go out on each side of him, quite stiff, and his legs go out stiff, too, and then, pretty soon, his body begins to lift up and up, and he is flying through the air! Later he goes to the Fraser River, or some other place where there are lots of cranberries, and he makes a sort of a belt of those cranberries, and he wears that belt all the time he's flying—that's all he has to eat!"

Heard the Hwol-Tup

"HAVE you ever seen one of these men flying?" I asked him.

Cum-See-Tun shook his head. "Well, I've never seen one close!" he confessed, "but long ago I was out in a canoe, going to Kuper Island, and suddenly I heard a funny noise! Well, just as soon as I heard that noise I knew what it was, because I'd often heard my father and other old people talk about the Hwol-Tup, and I'd heard them make the kind of noise that those men make when they're flying!"

"I've heard them, too!" said La-The-Tha, "and my father often used to see them flying over, making that noise. It sounded just like the noise the airplanes make now, but they made it with their mouths as they flew along!"

"Wait till I tell this story," said her husband, none too pleased at being interrupted.

"Now, I heard that noise and I felt kind of scared! I wasn't very old at that time, but I thought it would be fine if I could go back and tell them that I had seen a man flying, and I began to look for him. I listened to hear where the noise came from, and I looked and looked, and then I saw him!"

"Right on the end of Kuper Island, next to Tent Island, there was a tall, dead cedar tree, with some of the top broken off, and not many branches; and there, right on the top, lying stretched out, and making that noise, I saw a man! There he lay, and he kept turning, first round one way then round the other, as though the wind must be blowing him! I was a long way out on the water, so I could not see the cedar bark on him, but I could hear that noise going on all the time!"

"After a time he kind of dropped down off the tree and went behind some tall trees growing on the point, and I never saw him again."

Difference in Opinions

"MY husband's father saw them lots of times, when he was a boy," said the fashionably-dressed married daughter. "The priests stopped the Hwol-Tup. They said it was a bad spirit that made the people fly. But I don't! I think that people are not good enough now—that the spirits won't come!"

"How did they fly?" I asked; "did they use their arms as a bird uses its wings?"

"No!" laughed Cum-See-Tun. "They were stiff, just like an airplane. It was the spirit in them made them go along. Not many of our people did it, though. My father told me often about a boy who lived at Quamichan. I forget his name. He lived alone with just his father and mother, they had no other children. He never went hunting, never went fishing like the other young men; he was always sick and weak.

"Maybe it would be good for him if he was a dancer!" said the old father. So he called all his people to talk about it. They all came to see him, and there were big fires burning hot and bright down the middle of the lodge.

and each one did his own dance and his own song. Well, the boy just sat looking at them, and by-and-by he lay down, never said one word, and the spirit came out of him."

"Well, there he lay, just as though he was dead! They put him on the bed and put his blankets on him, and then they all began to sing and to dance, calling to the spirit to come back to the boy! For three days he lay there, and then"—Cum-See-Tun lowered his voice—"something came to him!"

"My father means a spirit came to him," explained the daughter.

Boy Starts to Fly

CUM-SEE-TUN nodded his head. "That's it!" he said. "A spirit came to that boy. He got up from his bed and he held out his arms and he began to dance. Along by the fires he danced, and all the other people sat quiet, watching. By-and-by he made a song, and until it was nighttime he danced and made that song! More logs were put on the fires that he might see to do his dance, and all kept quiet as he sang that song of his!"

"At last they could tell that he was near the end of his song, and as they waited the boy began to lift, up and up, until he was high in the air, over the fire!"

"Ah!" shouted his father, 'catch my son!'

Everybody ran about trying to catch the boy, who was now flying round beside the fires, his arms stiff and straight, and his legs the same! At last they got him and pulled him down, and taking two ropes of cedar bark, they tied them around his arms and then to one of the great posts of the lodge.

"Well, even then, do you know that they could not keep him down! His arms were tied, but his legs kept going up in the air, backwards, making him fall on his face. So they made the ropes loose so that he could fly a little way. You see," explained Cum-See-Tun, "his father did not want him to fly, for, he thought, 'If he goes away, we may never see our son again!'"

"Now the boy felt better when he found he could fly a little, and he began to dance a bit every day, and to make songs."

"One day he was dancing, and singing his own songs, and some of his people were watching him; when they saw him stand up on his toes and begin to swing back and forward, and his arms went out stiff! Then he started to cry, and while he was crying his feet left the floor and up he flew; up and up, round and round the fire, and the people watching him saw that the ropes had been broken from his arms. They called to the father, and as he came running in he saw his only boy fly out of the big hole that is made in the roofs of our lodges to let the smoke go out!

"Away he flew, and all those watching heard that noise like an airplane, coming from his mouth!

Was Gone for Year

NOW his old people had to get his home clean and ready for him to live in when he got back. Every day that house must be cleaned and there must be food put ready for him, and a lot of pitch put in a pile ready for a quick fire. Every day they must listen for him, and when they hear him coming they must hurry to have the fire burning and the food cooking. All these things must be done or he would never come back!"

"How long did they stay away?" I asked.

"About one year, most of them stayed, but some a little more, and I have heard the old people tell how all the long fringe pieces of the cedar bark were gone—worn away in the winds—when they came back, only the little knots left along the edge. But no matter how long they are away, everything in the house must be ready for them to come to."

La-The-Tha put down her knitting for a moment.

"My husband forgot to tell you," she said, "that the house for a man who is 'Hwol-Tup' must be away from all other houses, and when he comes back he is like a wild man. He shuts himself up in his house and prays and sings all day. No married people may go to see him, must not go near him, and no woman may talk to him. He has to keep himself clean and pure, not spoil himself in any way. And so he lives for the rest of his life."

"Does he tell where he has been, things he has seen?" I asked her.

La-The-Tha shook her head. "No one must ask," she said, "and a man who has been 'Hwol-Tup' talks very little: he only prays!"

"And that is quite true?" I questioned. The entire family looked at me in amazement.

"True? Oh, yes!" they all exclaimed. "All our people, and the people from the West Coast and from the North, all will tell you the same. They all had men who were 'Hwol-Tup,' only they had other names for it, but after the white men came our people learned bad ways and now the spirits won't come."

I looked at that family sitting round on their beds, with their marcelled heads and silk dresses, educated from earliest childhood in the local Industrial School, two generations of them, and a third playing outside the door. Yet, deep in their hearts the old superstitions persist, never to be eradicated.